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Addendum

The following factual, typographical and grammatical errors appear in the thesis:

p 37, line 12, 'Manchukuo' not 'Manchuko';

p 43, line 9, '*Thakin*' not '*Thakim*';

p 55, line 27, 'choose' not 'chose';

p 56, line 25, 'Ma Than E' not 'Ma Tan E';

p 63, line 1, 'effects' not 'affects';

p 79, fn 5, 'Ann' not 'Anne';

p 85, lines 15-16, 'pushed its agenda' not 'pushed their agenda';

p 122, line 25, delete 'the' before 'women';

p 127, line 25, 'Dien Bien Phu' not 'Diem Bien Phu'. (This error is repeated on p 128 lines 6 & 10; p 129, lines 7, 21, 24 & 31; p 143, line 22; p 149, line 31; and p 150, line 4.)

p 129, lines 24, 28 & 30, 'Dong' not 'Pham'. (This error is repeated on p 130, lines 1 & 14, & fn 78; p 164, lines 19, 20 & 21; and p 262, line 1.)

p 133, line 10, 'descent' not 'descendant';

p 139, line 6, 'the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN)' not 'the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam (DRVN)';

p 141, line 10, insert comma after 'declared';

p 143, line 12, 'Rosenbergs' not 'Rosenburgs';

p 145, line 10 & p 148, line 28, '*nom de plume*' not '*nom de plum*';

p 151, line 6, delete 'the' before 'locals';

p 153, line 11, 'Sarit Thanarat' not 'Sarit Tharsat';

p 161, line 5, Angkor Wat was built between 1080 and 1150 not between the ninth and thirteenth centuries.

p 161, line 11, 'Khmer kings' not 'Khmer's kings';

p 162, line 8, 'Prince Monireth' not 'Prince Monsieth';

p 164, line 23, '1954 Geneva Agreements' not '1956 Geneva Agreements';

p 167, line 13, 'There was now an inclination . . .' not 'There was now the realisation . . .';

p 171, line 21, 'Shaplen' not 'Shaplin';

p 175, line 3, 'cowed' not 'cowered';

p 202, line 27, 'Menzies' and Holt's deceits' not 'Menzies and Holt's deceits';

p 210, lines 29-30, "'a case of mischievousness distortion and vindictiveness'" not "'a case of mischievousness distinction and vindictiveness'";

p 229, line 15, 'Kissinger' not 'Kissenger';

p 234 lines 20-21; as Wilfred had 'infrequently met' Morrisby (see p xiv), delete the phrase, 'an old mate of Wilfred's';

p 248, line 28, 'Americans for Democratic Action' not 'American for Democratic Action';

p 254, line 24, 'FRELINO' not 'FREMLINO';

p 257, line 27, 'signed the contract' not 'signed a contract';

p 261, line 14, 'accounts' not 'murmurs';

p 262, lines 1-2 should read, 'In early May 1977 Kampuchean forces launched attacks from Svay Rieng province across the Vietnamese border into Tay Ninh province . . .', not 'In early May 1976 Kampuchean forces launched attacks across the Vietnamese border into Tay Ninh province, a territorial out-crop that jutted like a 'parrot's beak' into Kampuchean territory.'

p 263, line 11, 'the Pracheachon' not 'Pracheachon;"

p 262, lines 16-17, 'a mad Maoist quest for ideological purity' not 'a mad Marxist-Maoist quest for ideological purity';

p 262, line 32, 'loathe or 'loth' not 'loathed';

p 263, line 32, Pham Van Dong not 'Pham van Dong';

p 271, lines 19-20, 'another unnamed source' not 'another source'

From Traveller to 'Traitor':

The Lives of Wilfred Burchett

Tom Heenan

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Monash University

In fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, this thesis comprises original work except where due acknowledgment is made in the text. It does not exceed 100,000 words.

[redacted]

Contents

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to work on their farm outside Limerick. Sadly, Artie passed away last January. This work is dedicated to his memory. Lastly, to my wife, Trish Joyce, for the love and encouragement, particularly during the darker moments. For the past eighteen months she has put the 'tucker' on the table. My debt to her is immense, and with this work I begin to repay it, and the other debts which have been outstanding for far too long.

Tom Heenan
Melbourne
20 June 2001.

Abbreviations

AAP	Australian Associated Press
AP	Associated Press
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
ACCL	Australian Council for Civil Liberties
ACP	Australian Communist Party
AICD	Association for International Co-operation and Disarmament
AJA	Australian Journalists' Association
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AP	Associated Press
APC	Australian Peace Council
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
AWU	Australian Workers Union
BBC	British Broadcasting Commission
BPC	Burchett Passport Committee
BP SLV	Burchett Papers - State Library of Victoria
CDNI	Committee for the Defence of the National Interest
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIADL	Commission of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers
CICD	Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament
CIS	Commonwealth Investigation Service
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
CPD	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates
DLP	Democratic Labour Party
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
DRC	Democratic Rights Council
DRVN	Democratic Republic of North Vietnam
FCO	Foreign & Colonial Office (British)
FEC	Far Eastern Command
FNLA	Angolan National Liberation Front
FO	Foreign Office (British)
FREMLINO	Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FREMLINO)
HMAS	Her Majesty's Australian Ship
INS	International News Service
ICC	International Control Commission
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IRC	International Red Cross
ISC	International Scientific Commission
IWM	Imperial War Museum

MAWF	Movement Against War and Fascism
MHR	Member of the House of Representatives
ML	Mitchell Library
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NARA	National American Records & Archives
NCCL	National Council for Civil Liberties
NLF	National Liberation Front
NNRC	Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission
NSC	National Security Council
NUJ	National Union of Journalists
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
POL	Palestine Orient & Lloyd Line
QC	Queen's Counsel
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RSL	Returned Soldiers League
SEATO	South East Asian Treaty Organisation
SLV	State Library of Victoria
SS	*Schutzstaffel*
UAP	United Australia Party
UDNA	Union of People in Northern Angola
UN	United Nations
UNA	United Nations Association
UNC	United Nations Command
UNCURK	United Nations Commission for the Unification & Rehabilitation of Korea
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UP	United Press
UPA	Union of the Peoples of Angola
US	United States
VPA	Vietnam Peoples' Army
VPC	Victorian Peace Council
WPC	World Peace Council
ZANU	Zimbabwean African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwean African People's Union

Summary

Wilfred Burchett was Australia's most controversial journalist of the post-World War II era. After a distinguished career with the London *Daily Express*, Burchett reported the Korean and Vietnam wars from the communist side. During the Korean conflict, he accused the US military of committing atrocities on communist prisoners-of-war, stalling the peace process and conducting bacteriological warfare raids over North Korea and China. His reports were dismissed in the western press, and Burchett was branded a communist propagandist and traitor. As a consequence, the Menzies Government refused to issue Burchett with an Australian passport, and denied his children their rights to Australian citizenship.

This thesis challenges the contention that Burchett was a traitor. On the contrary, it argues he was one of last century's great travellers who constantly traversed geographical and ideological divides, chronicling life on the other side. He 'jumped rattlers' during the Depression and worked the sugar cane fields of northern New South Wales. He also experienced Nazism's persecution of the Jews while travelling through Germany in the late 1930s. There he crossed the moral divide, which fired his determination to tell of events on its darker side. But it was the Burma Road that changed Burchett's life. He began his journey up the Road in 1941 as a travel writer for the Melbourne *Age*, and concluded it as a war correspondent for the London *Daily Express*, covering the Sino-Japanese War and the British retreat from Burma. In 1944 he transferred to the Pacific theatre, and accompanied the American fleet on its island-hopping rout of the Japanese. It was a journey on which Wilfred bridged racial and ideological divides. He was the first western journalist into Hiroshima after the dropping of the atomic bomb. Whereas once he had written glowingly of American military might, he now began to question its use, and to see the Japanese not as racially inferior savages but victims. Transferred to Germany by the *Express* in late 1945, he wrote on the escalation of tensions between the US and Soviet Union, concluding that the former was using its military and economic power to divisively shape the post-war world. Consequently, his reports became pro-Soviet, and he left Fleet Street to become a crusading journalist for the left-wing press.

Burchett was not an ideologue, but a romantic revolutionary, who was attracted to flash-points along the ideological divide. Though he covered the communist side of the divide, his reports were not propaganda. In Korea, Burchett's concerns about the US military's treatment of communist prisoners-of-war and its conduct of the peace talks were privately echoed in British Foreign Office documents. But the germ warfare story rankled British, US and Australian authorities. This thesis argues that Burchett was reporting the truth as he saw it. The story, and the allegation that Burchett interrogated captured UN prisoners-of-war who had confessed to conducting the germ warfare raids, prompted the Menzies Government to investigate the possibility of prosecuting the journalist for treason. But the case against Burchett could not be substantiated, and so on the prompting of the US military's Far Eastern Command, the Menzies Government embarked on a campaign to discredit the journalist. The myth of 'Burchett the traitor' was created, and was knowingly continued by Menzies' Liberal

predecessors, Holt and Gorton. The Vietnam War, however, revealed the myth's fallacy. Though barred from Australia, Burchett was courted by senior US State Department officials and Foreign Office diplomats, because of his contacts with the North Vietnamese and the National Liberation Front in the South. As a result, he was allowed to visit the US and Britain.

His Australian passport was finally returned on the election of Gough Whitlam's Labor Government in 1972, amidst allegations from the Catholic-based Democratic Labour Party that Burchett was a KGB agent. A Soviet defector, Yuri Krotkov, had made the allegations before the US Senate Sub-committee on Internal Security in 1969. In 1971 Krotkov's testimony was tabled in the Australian Parliament by the DLP senator, Vince Gair, and published in the party's pamphlet, *Focus*. Burchett sued the pamphlet's publisher, Jack Kane. The case, though instigated by Burchett, mobilised Australia's military, political and security establishments against him. All were keen to see the myth of the traitor maintained. Despite the jury finding that Burchett had been defamed, it ruled the article was a legitimate report of Senate proceedings and therefore protected by parliamentary privilege. Unable to meet Kane's costs, Burchett was financially exiled from Australia. The right used the verdict to reinforce the traitorous Burchett, and he spent the remainder of his years attempting to clear his name. This thesis attempts to tell Burchett's side of the story, and reveals that the traitorous myth was a government fabrication.

Introduction

A life can be born at any time and for any reason. It does not need a nine-month gestation, followed by the mere snip of an umbilical cord. A mere stroke of a pen will do.

Wilfred Burchett was born in Melbourne on 16 September 1911, around the time that the Russian Prime Minister, Stolypin, was fatally wounded by the Jewish anarchist, Bogarov, in a Kiev theatre. The Melbourne *Herald* warned that the assassination was the handiwork of "a secret society of fools who [had] appoint[ed] themselves judge, jury and executioner." The paper called for the establishment of "a highly paid secret police" to protect the innocent from the likes of Bogarov. "The spy", it declared, "must redouble his energy."[1] Young Wilfred's parents, George and Mary Burchett, would have been shocked to discover that by the mid-1950s an energetic band of spies had redoubled their energies, and were busily constructing a damning portrait of their son.

This Wilfred Burchett was born in July 1954, as the blood-and-bone Burchett was about to enter his forty-fifth year. For security reasons the latter was not at the birth, and only became aware of it some years later when the other Burchett began to overly influence his life. On 16 July 1954 the United States Army's Far Eastern Command (FEC) contacted the Australian Embassy in Tokyo. FEC had been concerned for sometime about the journalistic activities of Wilfred Burchett and his British colleague, Alan Winnington. They had proved troublesome during the recently completed Korean War. From their positions behind the communist lines, they had been overly critical of the American negotiators during the Kaesong and Panmunjom peace talks, revealed the mistreatment of communist prisoners-of-war on Koje Island, and accused the US Air Force (USAF) of conducting bacteriological warfare raids over North Korea. FEC noted that the journalists had recently arrived in Indo-China, and fearing that they would again prove troublesome, requested permission from the Menzies Government to declassify a US military intelligence report on Burchett and Winnington's activities in Korea.[2] The report alleged that they had been "official spokesmen" for the North Korean and Chinese governments, and "given aid and comfort to the enemy." Furthermore, they had concocted the bacteriological warfare story, and forcibly extracted confessions from captured American airmen to legitimate it. Attached to the report were statements from four recently repatriated airmen, who had recanted their confessions on returning to the US.[3] As the Australian Embassy in Tokyo explained to the Department of External Affairs in Canberra, FEC was "anxious" to use the airmen's statements "in broadcasting

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[1] The Melbourne *Herald*, 20 September 1911.
[2] Top secret cablegram from the Australian Embassy to the Department of External Affairs in Caanberra, 16 July 1954; NAA6119/XR1, item 15, folio 21.
[3] Confidential US Army Report, "Communist Intelligence and Propaganda Activities of Wilfred Burchett and Alan Winnington"; *ibid*, folios 27-31.

pamphlets and other propaganda aimed at discrediting these two men."[4] The Menzies Government, on ASIO's recommendation, had no objections, and so with the stroke of a pen another Burchett was born[5]

On 27 September 1983 the real Burchett died in the Bulgarian capital, Sofia. In the interim period - between the birth of the other and the actual's death - Burchett had become a journalist of influence to some, because of his reports from behind the enemy lines during the Vietnam War, and an agent of influence to others, through his alleged links to the KGB. In 1955, Sir Robert Menzies had stripped Burchett of his Australian passport. Labor's Gough Whitlam finally reissued it on coming to power in 1972. In the meantime, Wilfred had supped at the tables of Ho Chi Minh and Chou En-lai, and Kim Il Sung and Henry Kissenger, and even shaken hands with the US President, Richard Nixon. At the height of his career during the late 1960s, Wilfred's contacts were not only the envy of his colleagues, but also perhaps of several lesser Liberal prime ministers. Arguably, during that period, Wilfred was one of the world's most influential Australian.

But he was not a good judge of his enemies. In October 1974 he completely underestimated the political clout and rat-cunning of the former Democratic Labor Party (DLP) senator, Jack Kane. Burchett had sued Kane for libel over an article published in the DLP organ, *Focus*, in 1971, which recounted the 1969 testimony of a Soviet defector, Yuri Krotkov, before the US Senate Sub-committee on Internal Security. Krotkov, a minnow in espionage circles, had touted that Burchett was a KGB agent. The DLP senator, Vince Gair, tabled Krotkov's testimony in the Senate where it fell under the protection of parliamentary privilege. It was this that brought about Burchett's demise. In the 1974 libel action, Justice Robert Taylor ruled that although Burchett had been defamed in the *Focus* article, it too was subject to parliamentary privilege. Costs were awarded against Burchett, financially exiling him from Australia.

The trial had provided Wilfred with the opportunity to confront his critics and put to rest his other traitorous self, but he lost the case and the propaganda war. With his exile from Australia, and no further wars of note to bolster his flagging reputation, the traitorous Burchett took hold of his life, and on Wilfred's death determined his memory.

Obituary writers in Australia's mainstream dailies hesitantly grappled with that memory. John Moses in the *Australian* suggested that Burchett was acknowledged by some as "a gregarious, knowledgeable - even - erudite man", but by others demonised as a "traitor." He had died, Moses regretted, with "the enigmatic nature of his character and personality unsolved."[6] Bill Hitchings in the Melbourne *Herald*, which had not been an admirer of Burchett's work, also pondered whether the

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[4]The top secret cablegram, 16 July 1954, *op cit.*

[5] See the comments of the Director-General of Security on the Tokyo telegram, 16 July 1954 & Secret cablegram from the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, to the Australian Embassy, Tokyo, 27 July 1954; *ibid*, folio 20.

[6] The *Australian*, 29 September 1983.

latter's life was "myth or fact." None the wiser, he concluded, it "was certainly bizarre."[7] Even those who said they knew and liked Burchett, harboured doubts. The Melbourne *Sun's* Tom Prior was a first-class, foot-in-the-door news-scrapper. He had first met Burchett in New Caledonia in 1971, when the latter was attempting to re-enter Australia without a passport after an absence of 20 years. They were an odd couple: Prior the staunch DLP supporter, and Burchett the infamous communist sympathiser and traitor. But they became friends, and every Christmas until Burchett's death, exchanged season's greetings.[8] Prior remembered Burchett as "a cultivated, civilised man who taught me most of the little I know about Asian peoples." He added, "I liked him and I'm sorry he's dead." But he tempered his remarks with the suggestion that Burchett possibly was a traitor "by the standards of the day."[9]

For the enemies that Burchett had made on the right over the years, such obituaries were limp responses for a contemptible life. Thus, the traitorous self had to be stridently reinforced to offset any moves by Burchett's supporters on the left to redeem his reputation. It was inevitable that his life would become conjectural after his death, damned or praised according to the political shade of the writer or commentator. Snippets from his life would be used, often abused and sometimes lost amidst clamour from the left and right to push their respective ideological points. The polemicists set about writing their Burchetts to support the topic of the day; whether it be the Cambodian genocide, the re-writings of the Korean and Vietnam wars, or the debate over ASIO's relevance. He was to become known only within this parameter of jousting 'truths', obscuring the other Burchetts contained in his works, and in the voluminous literature of the various bureaucracies employed to plot his movements and chronicle his thoughts.

*

The debate over Burchett's memory began in the early 1980s with the publication of Robert O'Neill's *Australia in the Korean War, 1950-1953*. It was the official history, and defended the UN and American line that the war was a defence against communist expansionism. O'Neill assigned Brigadier Phillip Greville to write a chapter on the ordeals of the Australian prisoners-of-war. Greville had been a prisoner in Korea, and so seemed a sound choice. But he had also testified on Jack Kane's behalf at the 1974 trial. Greville used the official history to portray Burchett as a traitor who had tried to sway Australian and American prisoners from their allegiances to the UN.[10]

The historian, Gavan McCormack, was generally unimpressed by O'Neill's work. It had ignored the revisionist story of the war as told in I F Stone's *Hidden History*, Burchett and Winnington's reports, and subsequent works by Jon Halliday and Bruce Cummings. McCormack countered with his own revisionist version, *Cold War Hot War*. In the August 1984 edition of *Australian Society*, McCormack dubbed Burchett "an Australian Dreyfus", challenged the prevailing

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[7] The Melbourne *Herald*, 28 September 1983.
[8] Personal conversation with the author, April 1994.
[9] The Melbourne *Sun*, 29 September 1983.
[10] Phillip Greville, "The Australian Prisoners-of-War", in Robert O'Neill's *Australia in the Korean War*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1983, p 565.

right-wing myths about his alleged KGB connections, and defended his reportage of the Korean War. Burchett, McCormack maintained, "was a journalist inspired by an uncommon passion [who] . . . was almost alone in seeing the War primarily from the viewpoint and suffering of the Korean people rather than that . . . of the great powers or his own or any other governments." Provocatively, McCormack added, Burchett was "one of the great journalists of our time and an outstanding Australian."[11] The claim brought a clamorous response from the right-wing monthly, *Quadrant*.

Originating as one of the CIA-sponsored Congress for Cultural Freedom's publishing armoury, *Quadrant* touted a pro-American line, and so had been a trenchant critic of Burchett's work. In August 1967, it had published Denis Warner's scathing piece, "Who is Wilfred Burchett?", which detailed - amongst other crimes - Burchett's alleged treacheries during the Korean War. More recently, *Quadrant* had carried Jack Kane's account of how he had unmasked Burchett as "a Communist operative . . . under KGB direction and control."[12] But *Quadrant's* most carping Burchett critic was Frank Knopelmacher. A post-war Eastern European émigré, he abhorred Soviet totalitarianism, and Burchett's defence of it.[13] On Burchett's death, Knopfelmaher had suggested that a crown prosecution should have followed the Kane trial. But Knopfelmacher failed to mention the jury had found the *Focus* article defamatory of Burchett.[14] As with most of the *Quadrant* school, Knopfelmacher seemed afflicted with selective memory.

So too was Robert Manne, a former student of Knopfelmacher's at the University of Melbourne. Manne also abhorred totalitarianism. He considered that the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, and the rise of fascism in Germany in 1933, were not dissimilar events. Indeed, both had left Manne "suspicious . . . of all dreams for the reconstruction of human society on the basis of logically explicated first principles."[15] Manne also felt that Australia's intellectual resolve to withstand totalitarianism had been weakened by the Vietnam War, as left-wing academics - like McCormack, "doctored" history to justify "neo-Stalinist" interpretations.[16] Manne contended that "liberal anti-communism . . . [was] so completely defeated in western universities and intellectual circles that one could no longer hope that arguments couched in its language would be listened to seriously."[17] Vigilantly, he pressed the anti-communist line and campaigned for a strong security network to counter leftist subversion. ASIO was Manne's bastion, and its former Director-General, Charles Spry, one of his heroes. He later praised Spry's dedication to the fight against communists and Soviet infiltrators.

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[11] Gavan McCormack, "The Australian Dreyfus? Re-examination of the case against journalist Wilfred Burchett", Australian Society, vol 3, no 8, 1 August 1984 pp 6-12.
[12] Denis Warner, "Who is Wilfred Burchett", *Quadrant*, August-September 1967; & Jack Kane, "Burchett on Trial?", *Quadrant*, October 1981.
[13] See Frank Knopfelmacher, "My Political Education", in *Quadrant 25 Years*, p 132.
[14] Frank Knopfelmacher, "As I Please: Traitor Burchett", *Quadrant*, November 1983.
[15] Robert Manne, *The Culture of Forgetting*, pp 106-107: & " The Shadow of 1917", *The Shadow of 1917: Cold War Conflict in Australia*, p 16.
[16] Robert Manne, "He Chose Stalin: The Case of Wilfred Burchett", *ibid*, p 32.
[17] Robert Manne, "Pol Pot and the Intellectuals", *The Shadow of 1917: Cold War Conflict in Australia*, pp 180-181.

He was "an Australian patriot of the old school", Manne declared.[18] Perhaps such sentiments blinkered his view of Spry and ASIO, and their treatment of Burchett.

In 1985, ASIO's files on Burchett's Korean War activities became available under the 30 years' rule. Manne selectively used the papers, along with Burchett's letters to his family housed at the State Library of Victoria, to refute McCormack's assertions and tarnish the journalist's reputation once and for all. Manne's Burchett was a vulgar Stalinist, and an apologist for the Soviet Union's occupation of Eastern Europe. He was also a communist propagandist who had fabricated the germ warfare story, and had assisted in the extraction of confessions from US airmen who had allegedly participated in the raids. Furthermore, Burchett had also attempted to sway UN prisoners-of-war to the communist cause, and was a KGB operative. He was "in the deepest sense of the word a traitor."[19]

Uncritically, Manne had pushed touted ASIO's line, without adequately evaluating the evidence to the contrary. But he was involved in a war of words, in which facts were often substituted with rhetorical flourishes. Manne obviously considered he was playing a propaganda game according to the left's rules. The left, he felt advocated revolution, supported social engineers, and falsified history. Against such unscrupulous opponents the word war had to be fought on the left's terms. So Manne, the critic of left-wing historical caricaturists, pieced together a simple and believable caricature of his own from Burchett's ASIO file, and for his efforts was awarded by *Quadrant* the George Watson Essay Prize for 1985.

According to Knopflemacher, Manne's article dispelled any "lingering doubt" about Burchett's reputation.[20] *Quadrant* followed it with Edwin Morrisby's "Wilfred Burchett of the KGB?; A Memoir." Morrisby was a former freelance film maker who had accompanied Burchett to Hanoi in the late 1960s, and wrote not as a Cold War propagandist, but as a "friend" who "knew [Burchett] as well as any." It was a disarming claim, especially given the seriousness of Morrisby's allegations. His former Bulgarian girlfriend had apparently told him that Burchett was a KGB agent. Furthermore, she had confided that Burchett's Bulgarian-born wife, Vessa, was a member of the Bulgarian secret police. Though Morrisby admitted that he had "no concrete evidence" to support these, or his other claim that Burchett had received a large sum of money from the North Vietnamese, *Quadrant* considered them significant enough to publish.[21] They were purely idle speculations, touted to further tarnish Burchett's reputation. When Vessa Burchett publicly challenged Morrisby, he responded that "she was not party to all aspects of [Wilfred's] character." Astonishingly, Morrisby, who had infrequently met Burchett, claimed to know more about the journalist than his wife. He now reckoned Burchett "was not an agent

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[18] See Manne's obituary to Spry in the Melbourne *Age*, 1 June 1994.
[19] Robert Manne, "He Chose Stalin", *op cit*, p 92.
[20] Frank Knopfelmacher, "As I Please: Wilfred Burchett's Treason - Drifting into a Moral Morass", *Quadrant*, September 1985, pp 32-33.
[21] Edwin Morrisby, "Wilfred Burchett of the KGB?; A Memoir", *Quadrant*, October 1985, pp 28 & 32.

of the KGB in the accepted sense . . . but rather what the Soviets call[ed] an . . . agent of influence."[22] It marked a subtle but important shift.

The editor of the *Reader's Digest*, John Barron, had bandied about the term in his 1974 work *KGB: The Work of Soviet Secret Agents*. Barron, who also considered Krotkov one of the Soviet's most important defectors, had suggested that the KGB used their "own disguised voices" in all circles of western life "to alter opinion in the interests of the Soviet Union."[23] At the time of Burchett's death, the concept had been given undue credibility. The former secretary of the Australian Labor Party, David Coombe, had been allegedly cultivated by a Soviet trade official, Valery Ivanov. At the subsequent Hope Royal Commission into ASIO, its Director-General, Harvey Barnett, alleged that Coombe was in danger of becoming a Soviet agent of influence. In his 1984 report, Justice Hope reinforced that it was the responsibility of ASIO to investigate cases of foreign governments attempting "to cultivate a person in order that he act as an agent of influence for it." Hope conceded that the subject under suspicion might have acted unwittingly or unknowingly, but this was secondary to the purpose of snaring the infiltrator.[24] The tag was indeed so broad-ranging that it could be used to cover anyone purporting an opinion favourable to the Soviet Union. For the likes of Morrisby, the tag could be used to smear enemies, drawing inferences that were not there.

Melbourne's foremost Catholic propagandist, B A Santamaria, had been a longstanding critic of Burchett, and lent his support to Morrisby's claims. Santamaria edited the right-wing magazine *News Weekly* and had long considered Burchett a traitor.[25] In early 1986, he suggested in *Quadrant* that Morrisby had no ideological interest in Burchett. Morrisby was strictly a film producer and businessman which, according to Santamaria, rendered his story more believable. Of course, Santamaria's was a spurious argument, which did not deal with the substance of Morrisby's story. Santamaria also failed to state that Morrisby, at the time of his article, was an unemployed film producer, who advertised in *Quadrant* for work. "Have skills will travel", Morrisby's advertisement read. *Quadrant* was obviously impressed by his talents, as soon afterwards Morrisby's travel articles became a feature of the magazine.[26]

The left responded, led again by Gavan McCormack with support from the academic and writer, Alex Carey. In an article that exposed the support from Australian diplomats, Keith Waller and Malcolm Morris, for the return of Burchett's passport during the 1960s, Carey briefly touched on the vacuous nature of the Government's case against the journalist.[27] McCormack's attention, however, had been diverted by the personal nature of Manne's attack. Justifiably, McCormack suggested that

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[22] Edwin Morrisby, "My Reply to Mme Burchett - An Open Letter", *Quadrant* July-August 1986, p 37.
[23] John Barron, *KGB: The Work of Soviet Agents*, p 26.
[24] *Report of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation*, November 1984, pp 31 & 35.
[25] See B A Santamaria, "Burchett: what does treason mean?": *News Weekly*, 5 October 1983.
[26] B A Santamraria, "The Burchett Case: Giving Aid and Comfort to the Enemy", *Quadrant*, January-February 1986.Morrisby advertisement for work appears in the April 1986 issue.
[27] Alex Carey, "Burchett's Diplomatic Defenders", *Australian Society*, September 1985, p 85.

"the resort to character assassination . . . pointed to the weakness of the right's case." "[V]irulence, he argued, "[had been] substituted for argument." McCormack rightly contended that Manne had ignored passages in Krotkov's 1974 deposition in support of Kane, which contradicted claims of Burchett's association with the KGB. He also reminded Manne that though Burchett had purportedly lost the battle against Kane, the jury had still found the *Focus* article defamatory.[28] It was a point that the *Quadrant* school seemed loath to concede.

In 1986, the left countered with the most convincing argument to date. The Cambodian scholar, Ben Kiernan, assembled a collection of essays on Burchett's life and career. Aptly titled *Burchett: Reporting the Other Side of the World*, the collection included a moving memoir from John Pilger; Philip Knightly's often critical evaluation of Burchett's Second World War reportage; Kelvin Rowley's summation of Burchett's blind-spot for Stalinism; David Marr's praise of the journalist's work in Vietnam; and Beverly Smith's incorporation of Burchett's life into the Australian radical tradition. But it was Gavan McCormack, again, and Alex Carey, whose contributions chipped away the traitorous façade, reiterating their positions on Burchett's work, and the Government's victimisation of him for not supporting its foreign policy line.

But they wrote in opposition to an already established narrative, fuelled by years of Burchett-baiting in the Australian press, and so were unable to dictate the terms of the debate. Furthermore, they argued Burchett's case alone. As McCormack lamented, "the Australian left showed only desultory interest in Burchett . . . and mainstream Australian historians, political scientists and sociologists none at all."[29] While Manne pieced together a cogent but misleading narrative of the journalist's life, the left concentrated on undermining Manne's work, rather than mounting a Burchett of their own. As a result, the right created the corpse, and breathed a life into it from ASIO's records. It was not merely a victory of left over right, but also of journalistic style over academic substance, of the caricaturist over the ruminator, of one brand of history over another, and of misinformation over information. As Manne later noted, the Cold War was "bitter struggle" during which the prosecution of truth and complexity were frequently and on both sides . . . sacrificed."[30] Manne's Burchett was tailored to fit the requirements of that "struggle."

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While the debate over Burchett's reputation raged in the mid-1980s, the *Sydney Morning Herald* columnist, Margaret Jones, pondered whether the Burchett she remembered belonged to either the right or left. He was neither "martyr" nor "monster to Jones, but an exceptionally "ordinary" man. She recalled a moratorium meeting at which an accident-prone Burchett appeared as a "comfortable grandfatherly figure who fumbled with his slides and put them in upside down." Jones met him again at the Strasbourg Film Festival in 1981, after a showing of David Bradbury's film of his life, *Public*

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[28] Gavan McCormack, "The New Right and Human Rights: Cultural Freedom and the Burchett Affair", *Meanjin*, Vol 45, No 3, September 1986, pp 389-396.
[29] *Ibid*, p 390.
[30] Robert Manne, *The Shadow of 1917*, p 13.

Enemy Number One. They had a brief chat before the drink set in, and Burchett became "tired and emotional." Over her breakfast the next morning, she watched horrified as Burchett refused his coffee and croissants, settling instead for the hair-of-the-dog, a cold bottle of beer. Jones thought at the time, that Burchett, "unlike most of his kind . . . was still living the legend, not just talking about it."[31] She was much closer than she realised to stumbling upon the actual Burchett.

The legendary Burchett was born around 1915, on the day Wilfred's grandfather, Caleb, began remembering his past. Caleb had arrived in Australia from London in early 1854 with his father, James, and the rest of the Burchett family. In 1876 Caleb took up a selection in the south-west Gippsland area around Poowong. It was about 40 miles - or two days travel by coach and foot - from Melbourne, and surrounded by tangled scrub and towering "monsters."[32] By the 1880s it had been transformed by Caleb into a structured landscape, in which all was known and had a *raison d'etre*. Caleb remembered himself as the conquering hero. His heroism formed the basis of the Burchett heritage.

But the land also had another side. It could seduce the senses, turning the Methodist Caleb's thoughts to an undisclosed sensual otherness, which like the land itself had to be disciplined. Every Sabbath Caleb and his father, James, shone their boots, read their Bibles, and contemplated Wesley's God. Their Catholic neighbour, Murphy, seemed less assiduous. He knew it was Sunday from the sheen of Caleb's boots. The first Methodist service was held in Caleb's house, and in later years, when Wesley's roving missionaries could only make the journey once in a while to Poowong, Caleb filled their breach. He even organised the search party for the missing missionary, Reverend Watsford, who was located cooeeing for Christ, after stumbling off nearby McDonalds Track into some stinging nettles.[33] Caleb was both pioneer and missionary who was moulding the land for God, not to forget himself. With every acre slashed and burned, he had quelled the sensual urge within that was capable of subverting discipline and duty, and the good book's teachings.

In 1922 Caleb left Poowong for what he thought would be the last time. Before his departure, he was honoured for his pioneering services at a dinner in the Poowong Athenaeum, at which he was presented with a gold watch. It was a fitting reward for the former Sabbath shoe-shiner. To mark his departure Caleb wrote a short story, *The Hazeldene Tree*, which appeared in the *Argus* on 7 January 1922. It told of a tree that had stood for 614 years until the arrival of an "intruding pioneer." In its' heyday - around the time of Cromwell - it was the "King of Poowong Forest Trees." But time and bushfires had taken their toll, and it had developed "heart trouble and decay." It was time to make way for the pioneer, whose day had come. Caleb had taken the authorial liberty of appropriating the identity of the tree as a means of saying that his time had come. Through his Hazeldene tree he was

[31] Margaret Jones, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 August 1985.
[32] *Caleb Burchett Diaries*, p xviii; BP SLV.
[33] *Ibid.*

bequeathing his heroic memories to future Burchetts as a proud tradition, to not merely maintain, but to improve upon.[34]

In 1974 Poowong celebrated its centenary. To mark the event, a distant relative of the Burchetts, Ross Hartnell, was commissioned by the Poowong Centenary Committee to write the town's history. *Pack-Tracks to Pastures* was another in the long line of heroic small town narratives. Hartnell's history was so straight-laced it mentioned Poowong's then most famous son, Wilfred Burchett, only once, and that was in relation to a police matter. The more deserving Burchetts - those who had contributed to the town's development - peopled Hartnell's index. Wilfred, despite the aforementioned police matter and a highly publicised career, failed to rate a mention. His past belonged to another, more subversive discourse that the Centenary Committee probably wished to forget.[35]

Unfortunately, Wilfred had already written himself into the heritage. In his 1970 memoir, *Passport*, he recalled as a youth in the 1930s, searching for Caleb along Poowong's roads and tracks, as the old man wandered lost in the bush; or listening to his meaningless mumbles and laughter.[36] Old age had eaten away at Caleb's memory. He, who had done so much to establish the Burchett heritage, and to pioneer the area, now had no recollection of who or where he was. As Wilfred watched, Caleb died with no memory of the past that had given his life meaning. For Wilfred, Caleb's decline reinforced the importance of memory to self. The past housed all that made the present possible and the future attainable. It contained the heritage by which Burchetts were meant to live.

In the early 1920s, George and Mary Burchett almost surrendered their place in the heritage. They left the Poowong selection for Ballarat after swamp fever had wiped out their herd of dairy cattle. George quickly established a building business, but luck was against him. By the late 1920s he was bankrupt, and Wilfred was tramping around Mildura looking for work as a fruit-picker. He would later state that these were the "bitterest years of his life." The family's luck changed when George and Wilfred scraped together enough money to purchase the last block of virgin bush in Poowong. As with Caleb before them, they slashed and burned a farm into being, and in doing so reclaimed their place in his heritage. Writing in 1969, Wilfred recalled that the family had at last an "honourable means of existence." They were again worthy upholders of the Burchett name.[37]

But heritages are constricting constructs. They prompt their bearers to look for simultude rather than difference. When Burchett crossed the Yangtze River and entered Chungking in October 1940, he had packed his heritage with him. Like Foucault's Don Quixote he spent the ensuing decades travelling "endlessly over his familiar plain . . . without ever crossing the clearly defined frontiers of difference, or reaching the heart of identity." His preordained past informed all he wrote. As with

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[34] Caleb Burchett, "The Hazeldene Tree", the Melbourne *Argus*, 7 January 1922.
[35] See Ross Hartnell, *Pack-Tracks to Pastures*, Poowong Centenary Committee, 1974.
[36] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 38.
[37] *Ibid.*

Foucault's Quixote, Burchett's reports and books were "of the same nature as the text from which he spr[ung]."[38] Caleb's heroic past required an equally heroic present if Wilfred was to be a chip off the old block. Wilfred wrote himself into the heritage as the ground-breaking journalist, displaying all the attributes of his forebear on the deadlier frontier - the battleline.

More importantly, he constructed a world in homage to the heritage with its symmetrical landscapes, pioneering peasants and great paternal rulers, such as Ho, Kim and Mao, presiding over their organic societies. The China of 1951 filled Burchett with a joy that he had not experienced since his childhood days in Poowong, where - as in his peasant villages - society was an extension of the family structure, and the ruling elite's authority emanated from their role as the protectors of an organic tradition. Like Caleb and George, the Asiatic confraternity were deserving of due deference. Whereas Australian banks had foreclosed on its pioneering past, those great paternalistic rulers had nurtured it in their respective societies. What Burchett had lost in Australia, he soon rediscovered in his Asiatic simultude, which stepped straight out of the pages of Caleb's memoirs and into Wilfred's books.

But what of the actual Burchett; the one beyond rhetoric? He occasionally seeps through the cracks of the various constructs. In the late 1970s, the Khmer Rouge ambushed Burchett on a Cambodian road. He was slightly wounded. The incident was filmed by David Bradbury, and shows a bloodied Burchett wandering from the scene. For an instant his face was blank, and he looked neither martyr nor monster nor legend, just a frail and frightened old man.[39] He looked, as one imagined Caleb looked as he wandered mindless in the bush; someone who had lost not only his bearings, but also all that had made him. For a moment the actual had triumphed over the heroic Burchett, before the ego of journalism took over and he reverted to being a chip of Caleb's block.

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This is the story of Caleb's chip, and the other Burchett concocted to cloud the real Wilfred's life. It tells of one of the twentieth century's great travellers and journalists, who crossed geographical and ideological frontiers, experiencing and chronicling life on the other side. This thesis contends that Burchett was a traveller, not a traitor. As shown in the first chapter, "Journeys" Wilfred 'jumped rattlers' during the Depression and worked the sugar cane fields of northern New South Wales. In the late 1930s he travelled to Europe, where he witnessed the menace of German fascism and its persecution of the Jews. It was his first foray across a moral divide, and fired his spirit to tell of events on its darker side. But it was the Burma Road that changed Wilfred's life. He began his journey up the Road in 1941 as a travel writer, and ended it as a war correspondent for the London *Daily Express* in the world's most bombed city, Chungking. The Road led him onto the fall of Burma and his real 'real' peasant China. Off the Road, he trudged with the American photographer, George Rodger, over the mountains of Northern Burma into India in April 1942, as the Japanese pushed northwards from Rangoon. As chapter three, "The Road", explains, Wilfred wrote of this trek, and his other exploits,

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[38] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p 46.
[39] See David Bradbury's film *Public Enemy No One*.

with heroic flourish in *Bombs Over Burma*. But his tone masked deep-seated fears and insecurities. Wilfred was haunted by the spectre of cowardice, following his wounding on Burma's Arakan front in late 1943. The Burchett of *Bombs* was written to placate his demons. It was a defining work, a declaration that he would no longer cower under fire.

In 1944 and 1945, Wilfred accompanied the American fleet on its island-hopping rout of the Japanese in the Pacific. It was a journey that would take Wilfred across racial and ideological divides. Initially, he had marvelled at the destructive might of American technology. He considered the Japanese racially inferior, semi-savage warmongers. But on arriving in Japan, he began to also see them as victims. Befitting a chip off Caleb's block, Wilfred was the first journalist into Hiroshima after the dropping of the atomic bomb. The journey removed his racist blinkers and, to the annoyance of the American military, he reported the victims' story of the bombing. As chapter four, "Falling-out", explains, Wilfred questioned its morality, and began to suspect that the post-war era would not herald a new enlightened order based on peaceful co-existence between nations, but be ruled by American military might. His suspicions were confirmed in post-war Germany, and later in Eastern Europe, where his reports increasingly adopted a pro-Soviet position. Consequently, he left the *Express* and became a crusading journalist for the left.

But Wilfred was not an ideologue. He liked the romance of being on the cutting-edge of history. It was another of his frontiers. So too was the Yalu River. In 1952 Wilfred and the British *Daily Worker's* Alan Winnington crossed the Yalu from China into northern Korea. They were bound for the peace talks at Kaesong, which sought to settle the conflict between the American-led UN Forces and their North Korean and communist Chinese counterparts. As the title of chapter five suggests, Burchett and Winnigton used their words as weapons, criticising American negotiators for stalling the peace process; accusing American prison camp authorities of atrocities on Koje Island; and alleging that the US Air Force had conducted bacteriological warfare raids on North Korea and China. Drawing on British Foreign Office documents, this thesis reveals that the British Government privately shared many of Burchett and Winnington's reservations about the American's conduct of the peace negotiations and Koje Island atrocities. Furthermore, the papers of the Cambridge University scientist, Joseph Needham, who investigated the germ warfare allegations, indicate there are solid grounds for suspecting that the US Air Force conducted the alleged raids. This thesis argues that Burchett and Winnington were merely reporting the truth as they saw it, and so were not purely communist propagandists, as contended by their critics.

This thesis will also show that Burchett's subsequent problems stemmed from the germ warfare allegations. As ASIO and Department of Immigration documents clearly reveal, the Menzies Government lacked the evidence and legal clout to prosecute Burchett for treason, and so embarked on a campaign to discredit him and his work. Furthermore, as chapter six, "The Traitor", discloses, the Government was determined to use all means - legal and quasi-legal - to deny Burchett an Australian passport and his children their legitimate rights to Australian citizenship. Thus, the Government

concocted the myth of 'Burchett the traitor' and, as chapter nine "Reclaiming the Birthright" argues, Menzies' Liberal predecessors reinforced the line.

The Vietnam War marked the turning-point of Wilfred's career. It was another of Wilfred's frontiers, in which he periodically crossed into the National Liberation Front (NLF) controlled areas of the South, and frequently ventured north to Hanoi. In crossing these frontiers, he became a journalist of influence, courted by the Americans who were concerned about the welfare of their prisoners-of-war, and keen to establish informal dialogue with the North Vietnamese. Recently released British Foreign Office documents, tell of Burchett's representations to the NLF on behalf of the US Ambassador-at- Large, Averrell Harriman, and the US Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, for the release of the American prisoners. The documents also tell of Burchett's *ad hoc* advice to American negotiators during the early stages of the Paris Peace Talks. As the chapter "Journalist of Influence" reveals, the British and American governments expressed their gratitude by allowing Burchett to visit both countries at a time when he was barred from Australia. His Australian passport was not returned until December 1972, immediately after the election of Gough Whitlam's Labor Government.

In 1969, a Soviet defector, Yuri Krotkov, told the US Senate Sub-committee on Internal Security that Burchett was a KGB agent. With the Vietnam War raging and anti-war protests at their height the claim was made without substantiation. The Democratic Labour Party (DLP) pamphlet, *Focus*, published a variation of Krotkov's testimony, while Vince Gair, a member of the DLP's Senate team, tabled it in Parliament. Chapter ten, "The Trial", tells of Burchett's ill-fated attempt to sue *Focus's* publisher and Gair's colleague, Jack Kane, for defamation. This thesis contends that Burchett's case was ill-prepared; that several of Kane's witnesses clearly had altered their stories on Burchett over the years; and that Justice Robert Taylor's 'summing-up' to the jury unfairly reinforced the traitorous stereotype. The jury found the *Focus* article was protected by parliamentary privilege, and Taylor awarded costs against Burchett. His subsequent appeal was dismissed in mid-1976. Unable to meet Kane's costs, Burchett was financially exiled from Australia. As the final chapter, "Ruptures", suggests, his final years were spent watching his Asian revolutionary brothers - the Vietnamese, Cambodians and Chinese - warring amongst themselves, whilst attempting to reclaim his life from those who had hijacked it.

Though the Kiernan collection of essays, *Burchett Reporting the Other Side of the World*, provided valuable insights into the journalist's work, and the Menzies Government's early victimisation of him, there has been no major Burchett biography. It is a surprising omission from Australian historiography given the contentious viewpoints about his life. Drawing on Burchett's private correspondence, his prolific writings, and Australian, British and American archival material, this thesis intends fill the gap. Thirteen years have elapsed since the publication of Kiernan's work. Since, substantial evidence has been released by the National Australian Archives and British Public Records Office to support the early work on Burchett's life by Gavan McCormack and Alex Carey. Burchett

was an extraordinary Australian, and it is only fitting that his side of the story should be told, alongside the myth of the traitor. Together, they comprise one of the great scandals in this country's history.

Chapter 1 Journeys

Journeys often begin in the mind. There, places are conjured into being from books, travellers' tales and memories. These places evolve into imaginative spaces of the mind's desire, where the imaginer may escape from his reality by conjuring other, more extraordinary selves.

One morning Wilfred began his journey from Poowong - in his mind. He was working for a surly local farmer, Harrison, when a set of Sir J A Hammerton's *New Popular Educator* arrived from Winston who had recently established a lending library in Ballarat. The *Educator* was meant for those who had "neglected to make the best use" of their formal education, only to be later "awaken[ed] to a sense of what they ha[d] let slip."[1] Never one for the routines of institutionalised learning, Wilfred was just the type Hammerton had in mind. The constant troubles, beginning with the death of sister, Amy, from sarcoma in the mid-1920s, and culminating in the family's bankruptcy, had undoubtedly affected his academic performance. In 1925 - his last full year at Ballarat Agricultural High School - he had languished near the bottom of his class, prompting his teacher to note Wilfred's wayward attentiveness.[2] But the *Educator's* knowledge was different, not constricted by schoolroom routines and disciplines, or plagued by the troubles at home, offering instead prospects of escape. Wilfred recalled that it detailed subjects of historical, geographical and philosophical importance, and lessons on Spanish, German, French and Italian. It, he recounted, acquainted him with "Kant and Berkeley, Marx and Engels," and Lenin and the October Revolution. In actuality, the *Educator* had little on Bolshevism, and suggested that Marxism had not "been taken into the general consciousness of mankind."[3] Indeed, it offered more on accountancy than Marx and Engels, and Lenin and Stalin, combined.

But the *Educator* did romanticise the journalist, which undoubtedly caught Wilfred's eye. There was "no monotony" about the job; journalists did "something different everyday."[4] Furthermore, the trade was open to all comers, without the necessities of a well-heeled family or passable school report. Journalists of distinction were "born" and not taught.[5] Once on the 'beat', more worthy types could become "special correspondent[s]" - the most envied of the trade's jobs - and "wander about the world (with all [their] expenses paid on a generous scale), watching the events that shake it, making acquaintance with its most vivid personalities [and] never staying long enough anywhere to lose [their] freshness of interest." All that was required was fluency in "French and German", supplemented "with

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[1] Sir J A Hammerton (ed) *The New Popular Educator - The University in the Home, Vol 1.* See the page entitled "Opening Remarks."
[2] For details of Wilfred's academic efforts, see the Ballarat High School records; Book 9 - 1924-1938, forms D2 &D3. See also Philip Roberts' *Duty Always; The History of Ballarat High School, 1907-1982.* James Hill was the school's headmaster, and his lawyer son, Ted, later led the Australian Communist Party (ACP). James was also headmaster of Melbourne High School, where he taught another notable communist, Eric Aarons.
[3] Sir J A Hammerton, *op cit, Vol 2,* p 1230.
[4] *Ibid, Vol 1,* p 25.
[5] *Ibid,* p 718.

a little Italian and Spanish"; all of which were available to Wilfred through the *Educator*.[6] Each evening, Wilfred escaped into his room and the *Educator's* "exciting adventures", to Harrison's annoyance. He liked to control his homestead, and there was no place for an underling with notions. Harrison's wife was especially put out by the *Educator's* arrival. Wilfred recalled her sharp-tongued inquiry "as to whether 'book learning' . . . help[ed him] milk the cows or cut the ferns more quickly." But Harrison's older brother took a more enlightened view, telling Wilfred to learn all he could while he was young, for "you don't want to be pulling cows' tits all your life."[7]

On his return home from the Harrisons, Wilfred noticed a change in his father's politics. The old George had been a "liberal-conservative", standing unsuccessfully as the candidate for the Victorian Farmers' Union during the 1917 federal election, and securing endorsement as the Nationalist candidate for Ballarat in 1925.[8] But the family's tottering finances and the Depression had apparently radicalised George. Wilfred remembered his father's concern for Clive; a newly married, qualified carpenter who had been reduced to breaking rocks on government works to sustain his family.[9] To Wilfred's surprise, George had led the vote of thanks for a communist speaker at the conclusion of a local meeting in Poowong. Afterwards, George confided that the communist was "a straight and true man."' If Wilfred's memoirs - *Passport* and *At the Barricades* - are to be believed, father and son entered the 1930s doubting capitalism's capacity to provide for all bar those controlling the means of production. Wilfred remembered George remarking, "some new thinking is required if we are ever going to pull out of the mess we're in."[10] Given that between 1929 and 1932 world trade had contracted by 60%, world commodity prices had collapsed, and the local unemployment rate hovered above 30%, George's doubts seemed well justified.[11] But his radicalisation was not as extreme as Wilfred's memory would have us believe.

Winston remembered George as a "brilliant" lay preacher and "orator of the old school", who never "preached a sermon with a theological aspect." They always dealt with "social issues."[12] George, too, was a talented debater - a South Street champion no less - and a prolific writer of 'Letters to the Editor.'[13] Throughout the 1920s and 1930s his views regularly appeared in Melbourne's *Argus* and *Age*, and the *Ballarat Courier*. Common to all was his concern about the erosion of individual liberty and its regressive effect on civilisation. George maintained that individualism set modern society apart from lesser social forms. In Australia, where liberty was highly regarded, humanity had prospered and progressed, enabling reformers to "[picture] fairer lands where justice reign[ed], [and] . .

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[6] *Ibid*, p 465.
[7] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, pp 29-30.
[8] For further details on George Burchett's politics and Wilfred's formative years see Mark Purcell's insightful work, *Who is Wilfred Burchett? The Making of an Australian Radical;* unpublished Honours thesis, Monash University, 1990. See also Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 51 & *At the Barricades*, p 25
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 51.
[11] Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds; The Communist Party of Australia from Origins to Illegality*, p 203.
[12] Mark Purcell, *op cit;* & the author's interview with Winston Burchett, 10 February 1997.
[13] *Ibid;* & Anonymous, *He Chose Truth*, p 14. South Street was a prestigious debating tournament held in Ballarat.

. poverty, suffering and oppression ha[d] been banished."[14] Liberty had also made the British Empire great, with "its wonderful capacity for world leadership", and fired the exploits of George's pioneering forebears. Indeed, George proudly proclaimed that the pioneer, in "pushing beyond the furthest outpost of civilisation", had forged the Empire's greatness.[15] They were George's harbingers of progress, and he was the protector of their memory.

The Great Depression, however, had shaken George's belief in progress, though he still had faith in democracy's ability to clean-up the mess. The panacea, he suggested, was less individual enterprise and more "tolerant co-operation", if society was not to lapse into barbarism. Perhaps he was concerned about the growing interest in the extremist solutions mooted by the left and right, evident in the rise of the New Guard and Australia First Movement, and the allure of the Communist Party and Bolshevism, all of which advocated unseating the established order by unconstitutional means. For George, that order had emanated from a British tradition founded on well-reasoned and enlightened debate. He warned that utopian philosophies, like communism, could not succeed, adding that any change should only come through "constitutional methods." They were the cornerstones of self-governing societies.[16] For George, self-government was more than a political panacea to ward off pending anarchy. It stemmed from his conviction that democratic expression was part of the Creator's grand design.[17] To overthrow the well-reasoned and established order, was to undo God's handiwork.

Sometime during 1933 George and Wilfred put these principles into practice in Poowong. Supported by the local school-teacher and the recently arrived manager of the butter factory, they founded the Poowong Discussion Club. Winston maintained that the idea originated from his own Pathfinders Club, which he and some ex-Sunday school companions had established in Ballarat during the early 1930s. The Pathfinders contended that all subjects were open to debate, and its Poowong sibling adopted this maxim. Throughout the mid-1930s, the club was addressed by an eclectic mix of speakers, covering topics from evolution to the latest agricultural advances in the Soviet Union.[18]

The most prominent speaker was the one-time Moscow Menshevik, turned Melbourne Zionist, Dr Aaron Patkin. As a barrister in Moscow, he was closely aligned with the Menshevik leadership, yet it did not stop him from acting as an aide to the leader of the Russian Provisional Government, Alexander Kerensky, and as secretary - for a brief spell - to the prominent Bolshevik, Maxim Litivnov. In 1920 Patkin moved to Berlin, as the Bolsheviks clamped down on Jewish cultural expression, from where he made his way to Palestine. He landed in Melbourne in 1927, on the recommendation of his brother, Maurice, and the guarantee of his cousin, Simcha Baevski, more commonly known as the

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[14] *Ballarat Courier*, 21 January 1929; Burchett Papers, La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria (SLV).
[15] *Ballarat Courier*, 13 October 1928; *ibid.*
[16] *Ballarat Courier*, 3 March 1931; *ibid.*
[17] *Ballarat Courier*, 13 October 1928; *ibid.*
[18] Interview with Winston Burchett, *op cit.* Also see Mark Purcell, *op cit.*

Melbourne retailer, Sidney Myer.[19] By the mid-1930s Patkin was the Melbourne agent for the Palestine Orient & Lloyd Line (POL), which specialised in Jewish migration. He was also a member of the flourishing Melbourne think-tank, the Bureau of Social and International Affairs, where he mixed with the industrialist, A M Nicholas, the retailer, G J Coles, and the social commentator, Frederick Eggleston.[20] As a regular visitor to Poowong, he became a close friend of, and "adviser" to, the Burchett family. Winston recalled listening to his talks with George and Wilfred on the growing menace of anti-Semitism and fascism. He also remembered Patkin's generosity. It was he who recognised Wilfred's flair for languages, and arranged for him to have lessons in Russian.[21]

The influences of Patkin and the Poowong Discussion Club on Wilfred's early life were only fleetingly glimpsed in his memoirs. In both, Wilfred consciously tinged his youth with radicalism and conspiratorial airs. Rather than detail Patkin's lectures to the Club or his homestead chats, Wilfred's memoirs scantly recalled occasional visits from "a known communist, or some intellectual lately returned from the Soviet Union", which had rankled the town's branch of the Returned Soldiers League (RSL).[22] It, apparently, asked the local police to investigate the club, no doubt suspicious that a cow-cocky fifth column was plotting revolution from the community hall. Wilfred recalled that the police investigation proved fruitless, though it introduced him "to the world of heresies and witch-hunts."[23] He was barred from the local cricket team because of his association with the Club, while George resigned from his lay preacher post at the Methodist Church "in disgust at the stupidities taking place."[24] But this was written later, when Wilfred was truly an outsider, and his memory had been tainted by the anguish of his banishment from Australia. Furthermore, it was written when he felt impelled to reclaim his life from the other, traitorous one being peddled by his persecutors. At the time, however, the Burchetts seemed well regarded by most in the town.[25]

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'Robber' Ryan owned a sugarcane plantation on the Clarence River outside Grafton and, by Wilfred's estimation, was "one of the wealthiest farmers" in the area. Around mid-1933, Wilfred, fresh from jumping the rattler, approached Ryan for a job as a cane cutter and was bluntly told that he did not have "a chance."[26] Swallowing his pride, Wilfred accepted Ryan's offer of work as a milker at a lower

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[19] For a succinct explanation of Patkin's career see Hiliary Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia, Vol 1*, pp 576-577.

[20] See Pam Maclean, "The Convergence of Cultural Worlds: Pinhas Golhar - a Yiddish writer in Australia", in Hiliary Rubinstein (ed) *Jews in the Sixth Contient*, pp 142-145. The Bureau of Social and International Affairs was established through an endowment from the Melbourne stockbroker, C E Dyason.

[21] Mark Purcell, *op cit*, p 32.

[22] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 52 & *At the Barricades*, p 26..

[23] Wilfred Burchett, *ibid.*

[24] Wifred Burchett, *Passport*, p 52.

[25] See "Report on Application for Admission of Friends or Relatives into Australia", NAA6119/XR1. Item 12, folio 8. The report, by Inspector Roland S Browne of 2 August 1940, stated that Wilfred was of "excellent" character. If members of the family were dabbling in so-called subversive activities, it would have been noted by the authorities and mentioned in such reports.

[26] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 62; & *At the Barricades*, p 26.

rate than he had earned from Harrison and under far worse conditions.[27] Wilfred slept on bran bags in the shed, washed at a tap in the yard, and poured milk into his tea that was fit only for pigs. To make matters worse, he and his young colleague, Harry, worked sixteen-hour days. Harry was apparently Ryan's slave, regularly belted if he did not follow the boss's orders. This should have prompted Wilfred to chance his luck elsewhere, but he "was determined to get to grips with the cane-cutters and . . . tak[e] the real measure of the Boss."[28]

To the Wilfred of his memoirs, the cane-cutters, along with the shearers, were the aristocrats of rural labour and the manifestations of the bush legend. Wilfred marvelled at the cutters' "golden bronzed bodies and rippling arm and shoulder muscles", and admired their mateship, each being "honour-bound" to work at their peak for the overall good of the group. They were also an inquisitive bunch.[29] Unlike Wilfred's moronic Ryan who distrusted books and music, the cutters were avid readers of newspapers and magazines, and spent their evenings around the campfire, reciting the poems of Paterson, Lawson and "others inspired by the outback." They, and not Ryan, had inherited the ideals of the literary nationalists and lived the bush legend.[30]

Of course, there might have been more parsimonious reasons for Wilfred's quest to become a cutter. Throughout the Depression, the sugar industry had remained relatively prosperous behind a tariff wall. Hence, cutters' wages were triple those of other agricultural workers, making it a sought-after job.[31] Consequently, many unemployed workers from Australia's south trudged northwards to try their hand, only to find cutting a closed shop. Wilfred was luckier than most. Not only was he able to find work, but also he was allowed to try-out as a cutter. It was a chastening experience, "tougher" than he expected, and he spent the following days salving sore muscles and a dented ego.[32] But he persevered, and he and Harry spent more time amongst the cane, stripping it back in preparation for the cutters.

In one of Ryan's fields Wilfred noticed that rats had gnawed at the base of the cane, leaving a powder that aggravated his and Harry's nostrils. When Wilfred told Ryan, the latter strenuously denied the presence of rats in any of his fields, and warned Wilfred against spreading such rumours. Ryan, seemingly unbeknown to Wilfred, had his reasons. Weils Disease was being increasingly contracted by cutters from contact with disease-ridden rats. The Australian Workers Union (AWU), on behalf of the cutters, was seeking to have the condition declared an industrial disease, meaning that afflicted workers would be entitled to compensation for their illnesses at the owners' expense. Wilfred neglected to mention this in his memoirs. He did tell of the cutters' confrontation with Ryan over the

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[27] See Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, pp 62-63.
[28] *Ibid*, p 65.
[29] *Ibid*, pp 66-67; & *At the Barricades*, p 28. See also Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend* (Oxford University Press, 1978).
[30] *Op cit*, p 70.
[31] Wendy Lowenstein, *Weevils in the Flour: An Oral Record of the 1930s Depression in Australia*, p 381.
[32] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 71.

rats, and of their threat to summon the AWU to 'blacklist' the affected fields. Wilfred also noted Ryan's attempt to beat Harry, which was abandoned on the intervention of a burly cutter who suggested that he would be a more equitable proposition than the boy. Cowering, Ryan declined, prompting the cutter to quip, "you're not a man, you're a dingo." The incident marked the end of Wilfred's stint with Ryan. Wilfred found work with a decent cane farmer, where he finally "completed the whole cycle of cane production." He left the cane fields knowing that he was worthy of the cutters' company, and had attained "the real measure of the Boss."[33]

From a literary perspective, the story, which appeared in his memoirs, was a fine slice of social realist writing, casting the workers as heroes and the bosses as villains in a class struggle.[34] During the mid-1930s Wilfred had attended weekly meetings of the Australian Writers League where he met and was inevitably influenced by the social realists, Alan Marshall and Robin Close, the literary nationalists, Vance and Nettie Palmer, and the Melbourne *Herald's* Kim Keane.[35] The League had been formed in Sydney in January 1935, and sought to mobilise anti-fascist opinion and promote workers' solidarity. It particularly encouraged writers to delve into working-class life, to produce a "mature proletarian literature [of] . . . the mines, the factories and the workshops."[36] The League, held weekly classes, intended to develop "reportage" skills, which Wilfred attended. The classes unquestionably influenced his journalism and tinged his memoirs. Ryan's humiliation was just what the social realist formula required; strong and noble workers bonding together to defend the rights of the weak against an evil, capitalist farmer.[37] Wilfred wrote the story in the late 1960s, when he was barred from Australia, and so drew on the League's literary conventions to mark his place amongst the radical nationalists.[38]

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William L Burton suggested that "if you do not like the past, change it."[39] Wilfred might have had this in mind when, in the late 1960s, he set about remembering his Sydney of 1934. In later years he considered the period as "crucial in shaping [his] life and attitude towards [his] subsequent profession."[40] But memory often serves to justify the present rather than uncovering the past.

When the Reverend Arthur Rivett collapsed after speaking in Sydney's Domain in mid-November, Wilfred was an onlooker. Apparently he rarely missed a Sunday afternoon amongst the

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[33] See Lowenstein, *op cit*, pp 382-384; & Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, pp 29-30.
[34] For an explanation of the Social Realist genre see David Carter, "Documenting and Criticising Society", in Laurie Hergenhan (ed), *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, 1987.
[35] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 38.
[36] Statement by the President of the Australian Writers League, Jean Deveney, in an address to the NSW branch of the League; cited in Julie Wells,"The Writers League: a Study in Literary and Working Class Politics", *Meanjin*, 46, No.4, December 1987.
[37] Julie Wells, *ibid.*
[38] See also Beverley Smith's "Burchett's Approach to Asia", in Ben Kiernan (ed), *Burchett Reporting the Other Side of the World*, pp 112-113.
[39] William L Burton, "Uses and abuses of History", from the *American Historical Association Newsletter 20:2*, p 14: cited by David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, p 263.
[40] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 32.

Domain's political spruikers. They were predominantly leftist, and had "all the qualities which in the fairly strict Methodist atmosphere in which [he] was raised, counted as the essential of goodness in the broadest sense."[41] Presumably, Wilfred saw those qualities in Rivett, a long serving anti-war campaigner who spoke "with surprising strength and passion for his age" on fascism's menace to peace. Wilfred remembered Rivett pointing to an approaching taxi and announcing that the guest of honour had arrived. Rivett's body then buckled and he later died.[42]

The guest was the infamous Jewish Czech journalist and anti-fascist campaigner, Egon Kisch. The recently established, leftist-leaning Movement against War and Fascism (MAWF) had invited Kisch and the New Zealand communist, Gerald Griffin, to Australia to address the National Anti-War Congress in Melbourne, which had been scheduled to coincide with the dedication of the Shrine of Remembrance in November. The Government, however, was determined to keep them out. In October, the Director of the Attorney-General Department's Investigation Branch, E H Jones, advised that Kisch had already been barred from entering Britain.[43] Similar action was well within jurisdiction of the Lyons Government, as under the *Immigration Act* the Minister had the authority to bar any person deemed "undesirable" by either government officials, diplomats or another government.[44] Kisch, as a member of the suppressed German Communist Party and the leftist Association of German Writers in Exile, fitted the mould. The newly appointed Attorney-General, Robert Menzies, considered Kisch an "undesirable." Menzies advised the House of his unwillingness to allow "the enunciation of opinions . . . designed to bring about the revolutionary overthrow of the existing parliamentary system." In Menzies' opinion, Kisch and his fellow communists, in advocating such views, breached "[t]he limits of permissible free speech", and so the Government was well within its rights - morally and legally - to bar the Czech from Australia.[45]

When Kisch's ship, the *Strathaird*, docked at Fremantle in early November, *en route* to Melbourne and Sydney, he was declared a prohibited immigrant and refused permission to land. He was subsequently prevented from disembarking in Melbourne, though he attempted to circumvent the authorities by jumping from the *Straithlaird's* deck onto the dock. A fractured leg resulted, and he was quickly carted back up the gangplank. A Kisch Defence Committee, however, had been established, comprising the writers, Vance Palmer, Katherine Susannah Prichard and Jean Devanny, the editor of *Labor Call*, E J Brady, the political scientist, William Macmahon Ball, and Labor politicians and civil libertarians, Frank Brennan and Maurice Blackburn. In an attempt to free Kisch, the Committee issued a writ of *habeas corpus* in the Victorian Supreme Court. It failed, and while Kisch was steaming to Sydney, the Committee lodged another writ in the Sydney High Court. On this occasion, Justice Evatt ruled that the Interior Minister responsible for the Czech's exclusion, Thomas Paterson, had acted outside the jurisdiction of the Immigration Act, in that the source of information concerning Kisch's

[41] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 92.
[42] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 31.
[43] See NAA A6119/1, Item 24; cited by A W Martin, *Robert Menzies, Volume I*, p 132.
[44] *Ibid*, p 133.
[45] Cited in Robin Gollan, *Radical and Revolutionaries*, p 45.

undesirability was undisclosed and, therefore, unverifiable. Consequently, Kisch was allowed to disembark in Sydney.

But the Government sought another legal recourse. The 1901 *Immigration Act* had been amended in 1920 to include a dictation test for prospective immigrants in any European language. The test was a means by which the government could deny entry to persons it considered non-white or politically subversive. Griffin had been subjected to a test in Dutch, which he failed. Kisch's case was more problematical, because he could speak eleven European languages. To ensure his failure, the Government tested him in Scottish Gaelic.[46] The Defence Committee, arguing that Scottish Gaelic was not a European language, successfully appealed to the High Court against the validity of the test. Kisch was freed and travelled unhindered around Australia until his departure on 11 March 1935.[47]

But it was his appearance in the Domain that supposedly fired Wilfred's imagination. Wilfred would later claim that Kisch "measured up to the best of my idealized concept of what I had read in the *New Popular Educator* about the work of a foreign correspondent." He was "impressed by . . . [Kisch's] physical and moral courage, and . . . the way in which he used his pen to uncover injustice, and for life's good causes."[48] But this was Wilfred's Kisch written with the benefit of hindsight, when Wilfred, too, had served the anti-fascist cause with distinction, and been barred by Menzies.[49]

Beyond Rivett, Kisch and the Domain, another Sydney was expectantly awaiting the arrival of George V's second son, Prince Henry, the Duke of Gloucester. A million and a half people were expected to line Macquarie Street and its surrounds to welcome him.[50] The Duke was in Sydney to dedicate the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park, having performed a similar ceremony at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance on Armistice Day. Wilfred never mentioned if he was amongst those who thronged Sydney streets on 24 November to watch the Duke and war veterans, "responsible for [the] birth of a nation", pass on their way to the memorial.[51] It symbolised sacrifice to Empire and duty to the British race, and was worlds removed from the dissenters who crowded into the Domain to hear Kisch. In the streets gathered the other, more respectable Sydney, not included in Wilfred's memoirs. Nonetheless, it was a Sydney that he frequented and enjoyed.

On 26 December 1932, Wilfred had written to his parents about this other Sydney. Perhaps the letter was intended to allay parental fears that he had not strayed onto the wrong side of the tracks. If his activities during the festive season were any indication, there was no reason to suspect that Wilfred was mixing with anyone other than a respectable middle-class set. A roast dinner with his friend, Moses, and a lady companion, had been preceded by a Christmas eve 'do' at one of Sydney's

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[46] Egon Kisch, *Australian Landfall*, p 73.
[47] For an account of Kisch's period in Australia see A T Yarwood's "Foreword" to the November 1968 edition of *Australian Landfall*.
[48] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 82.
[49] *Ibid*, p 83.
[50] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 November 1934.
[51] *Ibid*.

"most exclusive cafes." Wilfred had also ventured to Moses' beachfront Bondi home. He glowingly told George and Mary: "I don't think I am wrong in describing it as the most beautiful home I have ever seen." He was also doing well at Palings. There were prospects for promotion in the sales section. A close colleague had recently been appointed sales manager at Newcastle, and he was keen to have Wilfred join him. George and Mary would have slept soundly into the new year, knowing that their son was performing splendidly at both work and play.[52]

Yet his remembered Sydney was not about social climbing, but radicalisation, and Palings was structured to play its part. In later years he was not so eager to boast of his association with the firm, though he coyly admitted he was good at his job. He was a door-to-door salesman, peddling vacuum cleaners to unsuspecting housewives, who neither required, nor could afford them. Palings had provided the training - albeit at Wilfred's expense - in sales techniques founded on trickery and deception, though he could "neither remember nor want[ed] to remember the various tricks [he was] taught."[53] Nonetheless, he was - by his own admission - moderately successful. His supervisor, a plumpish, European-accented type, offered Wilfred a salaried position. As he admitted, it was tempting, removing the strain of living off the commission from one's sales. But the remembering Wilfred took a highly moralistic stand. He informed his boss that he had done a cleaner day's work on better rates under Robber Ryan, than "listening to your sales experts telling me how to frighten people into buying all sorts of things they couldn't afford." He left the office and Palings, declaring he was "off to do a man's work again."[54]

If Wilfred did tell off the boss, it was a momentary rupture in an otherwise peaceful Sydney interlude. For most of his stay Wilfred served his bosses, and aspired to rise through Pailings' ranks. But this was not the past that his memoir required. That was on the Domain where perhaps he heard an echo of the man he was to become, and rewrote his past accordingly.

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In early 1969 Wilfred was soliciting international support as part of a campaign to pressure the Gorton Government into returning his Australian passport. Amongst those whom he contacted was the English novelist, Graham Greene, who responded in mid-April. Enclosed with Greene's brief note was a petition to the Australian Parliament protesting about the denial of Wilfred's human rights. Greene had added his name to it, stating that he was "very glad to do so." He also apologised for missing Wilfred in Paris, suggesting that he too would have enjoyed another night of "black velvet." Wilfred had just finished remembering other, long-gone "velvety nights", spent with his first love, the Tahitian, Natua.[55]

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[52] Letter from Wilfred to his Mother and Father, 26 December 1932; BP SLV.
[53] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, pp 79-80.
[54] *Ibid*, pp 88-89.
[55] Letter from Graham Greene to Wilfred, 21 April 1969; BPC Papers MU. See also Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 116.

On 30 December 1936, Wilfred and Winston steamed out of Port Melbourne bound for London. The journey was to be their grand adventure, arranged through Patkin's POL. Wilfred, since his return from Sydney, had earned enough money from construction work around Poowong to afford a steerage class ticket, while Winston was travelling on the proceeds from the sale of his Ballarat lending library. He was nurturing the ambition of becoming a journalist, having completed a correspondence course, and hoped that the trip would supply him with material to crack the Melbourne market. Wilfred, as yet, professed no such ambition, despite frequenting the Melbourne Writers League.

For Winston, the journey from Sydney to Noumea on the *Pierre Loti*, and from Noumea to Papeete on the larger *Ville d'Amiens* was a delight. Evenings were spent at the captain's table, sampling his red wine. Winston's taste was somewhat soured, however, when he discovered that the captain's vats were disused petrol drums down in the bowels of the ship.[56] Wilfred, in contrast, was confined to his cabin, plagued by chronic seasickness. When the *Ville d'Ameins* docked at Papeete, the captain, concerned for Wilfred's welfare, put him ashore. Another ship would pass in six weeks, the captain explained, allowing Wilfred ample time to recuperate. A local real estate agent allowed them to rent a bungalow on a nearby lagoon. It had apparently been the chief's hut in the recently released film, *Mutiny on the Bounty*. To the remembering Wilfred, the location was an exotic "dream"; a roomy hut made of "thatched coconut fronds" that looked across a tropical lagoon to waves breaking on a reef, and beyond to the island of Moreau.[57]

The next morning Natua arrived, "unexpected and unannounced." For Wilfred, the meeting heralded the commencement of a 'no-strings-attached' affair. She was armed with a spear and the "frankest" of smiles, and the couple spent their first morning together, fishing off the reef.[58] The following day, Natua and her two sisters, were unexpectedly discovered by Wilfred and Winston cleaning their bungalow. That night, she took to Wilfred's bed, becoming his first love. He recalled that her "innocent frankness . . . made short shrift of my Methodist inhibitions, as her generous nature made light of my inexperience."[59] Her name was a French approximation to nature. To the remembering Wilfred, "she was as much a part of the sensuous Tahitian setting as the perfumed fangipani and multi-coloured hibiscus." She enjoyed "the simple things[;] . . . the vivid colours of a fish, a particularly symmetrical clump of coral [or] the lapping of lagoon waters." She was the heart of his Tahiti, as giving as the island itself. For in Wilfred's Tahiti fruit dropped freely from trees into waiting laps, while fish willingly jumped from lagoons into boats. Indeed, he suspected that the island's natural abundance encouraged "indolence" amongst the natives. Nonetheless, it was a petty price to pay in a place where nature and humanity had attained "perfect harmony." And so had Wilfred, as "golden days and velvety nights succeeded each other."[60]

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[56] Author's conversation with Winston Burchett on 10 February 1997.
[57] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 41.
[58] *Ibid*, p 42.
[59] *Ibid*, p 46.
[60] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 116.

But Wilfred's Tahiti was also an orientalist construct. Edward Said maintained that European culture" managed and produced the Orient as it desired", thus sublimating Oriental expression within dominant occidental designs. Europeans, from their superior position, determined the structure of their Orients, reinforcing the hegemonic order of "European superiority over Oriental backwardness."[61] Wilfred's Tahiti did just this. From the comfort of his film-set hut, Wilfred boasted that he had discovered the real Tahiti beyond the tourist brochures. Moreover, he had experienced "life as lived by the Tahitians."[62] But reality is in each beholder's eye, and, in its pristine form, caught within its moment in time. As time passes, realities become tarnished, clouded out by the memory's other collectibles. Wilfred's memory seems to have been tarnished by an Edenic genre that included Thomas More's Utopia and James Hilton's Himalayan Shangri-la.[63] Perhaps the *Educator* also played its part. When Wilfred sought to remember his Tahiti, he called upon the Edenically-inspired Tennyson poem, *The Lotus Eaters.*[64] The *Educator* was a fervent admirer of both the poet and poem.[65] It tells of a band of mariners who, on stumbling upon a pristine tropical paradise, are seduced from their duties to family, country and empire by the lulling "choric song" of the paradise's inhabitants. As in Wilfred's Tahiti, the mariners found trees ladened with fruit and flowers, and wasted their days slumberously "propt on beds of amaranth and moly", while listening to the mellow tones of the breeze. Why toil in fields, fight battles, or endure earthquakes, plagues and famines, when "[I]n the hollow of Lotos-land [one] could live and lie reclined . . . careless of mankind." The mariners decided to spend the rest of their days lotus eating, abrogating their responsibilities to kith, King and country.[66]

But Wilfred was made of sterner, more dutiful, stuff. When, in hindsight, he again confronted the choice between a life of "lotus eating" and self-sacrifice, he chose the latter.[67] It was a decision that would have pleased the dutiful Tennyson. Natua was the singer of Wilfred's choric song, which had sought to divert him from his course. But she had no voice of her own within his story. In being one with nature, she was stripped of all her complexity. She acted unselfishly, because it was in her nature, and the nature of her place, to do so. To the remembering Wilfred, Natua was simply a worthy product of her overly generous environment. He did allow her to briefly mention her discontent about her pending marriage to a man whom she considered "too fat [and] too old."[68]. But it was an aside. There was no place in Wilfred's memoir for a voice subverting his idyll. She, like other islander women, might have been plotting her escape through marrying a white man. The more interesting story of Natua lies in the silences beyond Wilfred's words.

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[61] Edward Said, *Orientalism,*, pp 3 & 7.
[62] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 43.
[63] James Hilton's *The Lost Horizon* concerned a mythical Himalyan land where all wants were met, had been published in 1932. During Wilfred's time in Chungking in the early 1940s, he would become acquainted with the American journalist, Harrison Forman, who was a scriptwriter on Capra's production of the Hollywood version of Hilton's novel.
[64] In *Passport*, the chapter dealing with Burchett's period on Tahiti is entitled "Lotus Eating."
[65] Sir J A Hammerton, *op cit*, pp 657-658.
[66] Sir Lord Alfred Tennyson, 'The Lotos-Eaters'; (ed) W H Auden & Norman Holmes Pearson, *Victorian & Edwardian Poets - Tennyson to Yeats*, pp 5-10.
[67] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 119.

Her memory remained with him throughout his life. Maybe his night with Greene was Wilfred's way of momentarily journeying back to her. When he remembered her again in *At the Barricades*, he was no longer certain that his decision to forsake her or Tahiti was correct. There, "personal tensions and world problems shrank to a very tiny spot on the horizon", a luxury he was foolish to abandon.[69] Undoubtedly, the battles he had fought, and the wars he had witnessed, in the intervening years had taken their toll. He was now 70, and once again exiled from his homeland. But he did not dwell for too long on his losses. He continued remembering and wrote on about those years, once again fulfilling his Tennysonian duty to his craft.

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By mid-May 1937, dignitaries and commoners from around the Empire had gathered in London for the coronation of George VI. The London *Times* estimated that approximately 1000 visitors per day had flocked to the capital in the six weeks prior to coronation day. Amongst them were the Australian Prime Minister, Joseph Lyons, who "eagerly anticipated" the excitement, and Winston and Wilfred.[70] For the brothers, the coronation represented not pomp and circumstance, but opportunity.

Winston was keen to draw on the event, and London's other attractions, to improve his journalistic prospects back home. While Wilfred was eating lotus in Tahiti, Winston had been seeking out the writers of *Mutiny on the Bounty*, Charles Nordoff and James Hall, for a story.[71] He hoped that London would provide further famous fodder, and had earmarked the author, H G Wells, as a likely subject. Winston was an ardent admirer of Wells' work. Before leaving Australia he had written to Wells, advising him that he was venturing to London and wished to meet him. On his arrival Winston cheekily telephoned the writer's residence. He had expected a secretary to answer, but instead was greeted by the author's surprisingly "squeaky" voice. An audience was arranged, and Winston's star-struck account of his afternoon tea with Wells later appeared in Melbourne's *Age*.[72]

Wilfred was also attracting the attention of editors back home, despite drawing on less grandiose sources. He did not seek out the famous, but being true to his Writers League tutelage, wrote about his experiences of London working life. Shortly after his arrival, he had noticed that Cooks Travel Agency was advertising for temporary workers fluent in French. The influx of tourists for the coronation, and the following International Exhibition in Paris, had prompted the call, and Wilfred secured a position because of his language skills. The work, however, was not to his liking. There was a "dull frosty atmosphere" in the office, and a narrowness about his fellow workers, whose "highest ambition . . . was to be able to wear striped trousers." He later remarked; "God how I hated that office,

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[68] *Ibid*, p 116.
[69] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, pp 45- 46.
[70] See the London *Times*, 12 & 13 May 1937.
[71] See *Passport*, p 115.
[72] The author's interview with Winston Burchett, 1 February 1997.

being greeted with 'old boy' and referred to as the 'man from down under.'"[73] Life was again lapsing into the ordinariness that Wilfred despised, and so he plotted his escape.

The Spanish Civil War, which had begun in July 1936, provided the means. Radical memoirs and histories have accorded mythological status to those foreigners who fought against Franco's Nationalists as members of the International Brigade. It was a sign of leftist pedigree, and the ultimate anti-fascist act. Fifty-seven Australians journeyed into Spain with the International Brigade, of whom thirty-four were killed.[74] The Communist, Sam Aarons, was among those who survived to tell his tale. He had sailed from Australia for Spain in early 1937, defiantly declaring: "I fight against war - with war."[75] His ship, the *Commissaire Ramel*, stopped briefly at Tahiti, where Winston and Wilfred boarded it. Shortly before his death in 1971, Aarons remembered his voyage to Marseilles, but failed to note the Burchetts' presence. He was certain, nonetheless, that there were no other volunteers on board.[76] Perhaps time had clouded his memory. In *At the Barricades* Wilfred recalled that Aarons travelled with a friend, Esme Odgers, who was also heading to Spain and the Brigades.[77] By 1971 Aarons was obviously reluctant about acknowledging Odgers' presence. A noted womaniser, he had left his long-time live-in lover, Myrtle Hart, and eloped to the Civil War with Odgers. According to Sam's son, Eric, the couple left Australia without the Communist Party's blessing. Party leader, Lance Sharkey, apparently also had designs on Odgers, but lost out to Aarons. Sharkey, however, had the last laugh. Odgers dumped Aarons for a Venezuelan during the war. Thus, by 1971, when Aarons was remembering his journey, he was travelling alone.[78]

But Wilfred remembered her. He recalled that the couple told him of "the worsening international situation", and that Kisch was in Spain, reporting for the republican side. According to the remembering Wilfred, this "news touched a sensitive nerve." He secretly harboured an ambition to make "a non-violent contribution" to the republican cause as a stretcher-bearer. Not even Winston knew of it. In July 1937, Winston left London to venture back to Australia, taking the overland route. Wilfred had decided to stay on and, in his brother's absence, plotted to join the Brigades. He recalled attending a Paul Robeson concert for the benefit of Basque refugee children, as well as pro-Republican rallies in Hyde Park and Trafalgar Square. During a rally in the latter, a call went out for donations, and Wilfred apparently folded a ten shillings note in a piece of paper on which he scribbled his offer to enlist. On receiving it, the speaker at the podium apparently remarked that "a very special contribution" had been received, and asked the scribbler to present himself. When Wilfred did so, "solemn-faced" and "suspicious" types took his particulars, and advised him that they would be in touch.[79]

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[73] "From Soho to Mayfair and Further", appeared in *Adam & Eve* on 10 July 1937. See also Mark Purcell, *op cit*, p 35.
[74] Robin Gollan, *op cit*, p 65.
[75] Cited by Stuart Macintyre, *op cit*, p 299.
[76] Sam Aarons, "Reminiscences of the Spanish Civil War", *Australian Left Review*, March 1973.
[77] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 47.
[78] Eric Aarons, *What's Left*, pp 29-30.
[79] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 49.

To Wilfred's "great indignation", they rejected his offer. He recalled that at the time spies were infiltrating the brigade, and the recruiters were not prepared to chance sending an unknown Australian who had arrived unannounced and without recommendations. Wilfred took his offer to the Paris headquarters of the French Communist Party, which had organised Aarons' enlistment. Once again, Wilfred was unsuccessful. The Communist Party's London office suggested that Wilfred could assist the cause by collecting for the 'Aid to Republican Spain Fund.'[80] In his memoirs Wilfred neglected to mention if he did so. It was not the role that history or his memory had assigned for him Like Kisch, and the foreigners who served in the brigades, he was suited for more heroic parts, and not the rank-and-file. Wilfred was too much of a political adventurer for that. He was not one for mundane, everyday routines, or to have his identity subsumed within an organisation. Wilfred was one of the great individualists.

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On 7 November 1938, a young Polish Jewish student, Hershl Grynszpan, fatally wounded a German diplomat, Ernst vom Rath, in Paris. The Nazi response to the assassination was swift and brutal. On 9 and 10 November Himmler's *Schutzstaffel* (SS) stormed Jewish businesses, synagogues and residences throughout Germany. Ninety-one Jews were killed, and approximately 20,000 arrested, while 177 synagogues were desecrated and 7,500 Jewish shops plundered.[81] The acts were not irrational mob aberrations, but a legally sanctioned pogrom, signifying Nazism's determination to rid Germany of its non-Aryan peoples.

Since coming to power in January 1933, the Nazis had legalised the dispossession of German Jews. Shortly after assuming office, Hitler, with the Jews in mind, had denationalised those regarded as "prejudicial to German interests."[82] The measure was accompanied by a boycott of Jewish businesses, and government orchestrated thuggeries in Jewish districts. In September 1935 Hitler introduced the so-called Nuremberg Laws, to protect "German blood and honour." Consequently, Jews and other outsiders were disenfranchised, and marriages between Aryans and non-Aryans banned. More portentously, under the Reich Citizenship Law, a distinction was introduced between the superior *Reichsburger* or Aryan and the inferior *Statsburger* or non-Aryan. [83] But perhaps the most damaging measure was the increase in the taxable rate of the 1931 *Reichsfluchtssteuer* or 'filght tax' to prohibitive levels. The tax had been initially introduced to prevent flights of capital from the country, but when the Nazis came to power they used it to pauperise intending emigrants. Between 1933 and 1937 German emigrants lost from 30 to 50% of their assets once they crossed the German border. As more

[80] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, pp 122-123.
[81] A J Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933-1939*, pp 166-167. See also William L Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, pp 527-531.
[82] A J Sherman, *ibid*, p 23.
[83] *Ibid*, p 59.

Jews sought to leave Germany, the tax was raised, and those who emigrated in the following two years surrendered from 60 to 100% of their total assets.[84]

In the weeks following vom Rath's assassination, the Nazis imposed a collective fine of 84 million pounds on the Jewish community and barred Jews from managing businesses. On 3 December, Jews were stripped of their properties, and their valuables were requisitioned by the government. They had become a pauperised class, prompting the British Embassy in Berlin to warn the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, that "over 500,000 people [had been] deliberately excluded from all trades and professions, and consequently [were] unable to earn a living."[85] Nonetheless, anti-Semitism was not confined to Germany. Western governments seemed not to possess the moral or material wherewithal to act. Most were not prepared to burden themselves with masses of penniless refugees.

In August 1938 Wilfred joined the London office of POL on Patkin's recommendation. He had been working at the Soviet travel agency, Intourist, but his tenure ended with the severing of diplomatic ties between Britain and the Soviet Union. In his spare time, he was attending weekend classes at the Linguistics Club, where he met Erna Hammer, a German Jewish refugee and mother of two young daughters, Ruth and Renate, and six years Wildred's senior. She was rarely glimpsed in Wilfred's memoirs, though, like Patkin, she was acknowledged. Wilfred was circumspect about his debt to both of them. It was because of them that he ventured into Germany in November on a journey that would profoundly alter the course of his life.

When the Nazis came to power, Erna fled to Palestine with her then husband, Lewy. The breakdown of their marriage, and the escalation of violence between Arabs and Jewish settlers, prompted her in 1937 to seek sanctuary in London. When Wilfred met her, she was struggling to provide for herself and daughters. She had been branded an alien by British immigration authorities and, as a result, was ineligible for a work permit. In his 1981 memoir, Wilfred briefly noted that they were married in a Hampstead Heath registry office during September 1938. The marriage, he added, ensured that Erna and her two daughters "secure[d] a haven in England."[86]

In his memoirs, Wilfred also travelled alone to Berlin. In reality Erna - at great risk - accompanied him. As Wilfred told his parents at the time, "Erna's passport . . . [had] absolutely nothing to show that she was formerly German, so I think we are both safe."[87] Indeed, she had her own reasons for going. Her brother, Adi Hammer, had been seized by the *Gestapo* and was in Sachsenhausen concentration camp. The couple arrived in Berlin on 20 November and immediately went to the home of Erna's parents. Also there was Adi's wife, Gerda, who remembered the "dare-devil look" in Wilfred's eyes. Later, she remarked that Wilfred was not courageous, just fearless.

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[84] *Ibid*, pp 24-25.
[85] Letter from Sir George Olgivie-Forbes to Lord Halifax; cited by A J Sherman, *ibid*, p 169.
[86] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 50.
[87] Letter from Wilfred to "Mother and Father and Clive" London, 9 December 1938; NAA6119/XR1, item 12, folios 4-5.

Courageous men, she added, know and respect fear. Wilfred did not. Gerda remembered her own intolerable fears; the cloth placed over the telephone receiver to disguise voices, and windows left ajar to warn of approaching *Gestapo*. One evening, Gerda's brother-in-law, on approaching the house, noticed an open window. For the next three days he travelled around Berlin on trains. Finally, the window closed and he returned home.[88]

Around the corner from the Hammer's house was the POL office. The company's London branch had not heard from it for sometime, or about the fate of its clientele. Wilfred found that it had been ransacked, and across its boarded windows scrawled, "dirty Jews."[89] As he wandered Berlin's streets, he noted the "strutting, arrogant . . . *Wehrmacht* officers" and the menacing black-uniformed *SS*, "saluting like automatons as they passed."[90] For 18 days he and Erna travelled through Germany. "Everywhere", he lamented, was heard "the same tale." Outside the capital, he found "the persecution was even more brutal." In Breslau he was told of "religious Jews" been ordered to torch their synagogue. When an old man refused to participate, he was killed, "instantly." He also heard of a group of Viennese Jews being forced to jump from the second storey of a building. "Some were killed, others broke their arms [and] legs", [but] . . . [n]o one was allowed to assist them as they lay in the streets." Nonetheless, Wilfred had managed to arrange the release of "a few people" from the camps and, at extreme personal risk, had "smuggled out a good deal of jewellery" so that they would not be destitute on their arrival in Britain.[91] Adi was not amongst them, despite assurances from the *Gestapo* that his release was imminent. Three days after Wilfred and Erna's return to London, Adi was freed. With Gerda, he travelled to London on papers organised by Wilfred. Later, he angrily remarked that, on the whole, "not a finger was . . . lifted to save [the Jews]."[92]

He had returned to a Britain in which anti-Semitic sentiments were gaining voice. Populist newspapers, such as the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*, opposed assistance to German Jews lest it interfere with Chamberlain's appeasement policy. The *Express*, fearing an influx of Jewish refugees sponging off the public purse, dismissively declared, "we have accepted our full quota", while in the Commons, the British Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, warned that more Jews would only intensify burgeoning anti-Semitic sentiments. Hoare's view was supported by the Foreign Office, which considered that the financial restrictions imposed on Jews by the Nazi Government rendered Jewish migration economically "less acceptable."[93]

But Wilfred, Erna and a POL official, Benthen, had a plan to circumvent this. In his memoirs Wilfred told of approaching various South American embassies for consular letters, advising that the

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[88] Author's interview with Dr Gerda Hammer, 14 August 1999; & Mark Purcell, *op cit*, p 39. For Wilfred's account of his first visit to the Hammers see the Melbourne *Argus*, 2 January 1940.
[89] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 125; & *At the Barricades*, p 51.
[90] *Ibid* p 129 &, p 55 respectively.
[91] Letter from Wilfred to "Mother and Father and Clive", *op cit*; & author's interview with Gerda Hammer, *op cit*. The story also was told in *He Chose Truth*, p 26.
[92] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 55.
[93] Cited by A J Sherman, *op cit*, pp 179-180 & 171.

application for immigration by the person concerned had been accepted. Based on the assurances contained in such letters, Nazi authorities were prepared to issue passports to Jews, once they had fulfilled their financial obligations the Reich. Most of the embassies that Wilfred and Benthen approached were amenable to the plan. However, each embassy wanted an undertaking that the recipient of the letter would not use it for its stated purpose.[94]

In December 1938 Wilfred and Erna returned to Germany to distribute the consular letters. Wilfred stayed until March 1939. By that time, a "ferret-faced individual" was tailing him, and his hotel room had been searched while he was out. He remembered his final tense train journey to the German border, where he watched as a "deathly pale", sobbing couple disembark at gunpoint. They never returned to their seats. He also remembered his long wait, while border guards rummaged through his papers.[95]

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In Australia, the Burchett family worked tirelessly to secure passages for Jewish Germans and Austrians. George Burchett, in the Melbourne *Age* had been campaigning vigorously for an increased intake of Jews. He condemned Hitler's "fanatical hatred of the Jews", and challenged the prevailing assumption that an influx of them would weaken the Australian race or dim educational standards. Australians, he implored, had a humanitarian duty to assist the Jews and, indeed, he and his family did more than their bit.[96] On one occasion, Winston, who had recently returned home, received an urgent message from Wilfred, requesting the Australian Government's assistance in securing the release of a recently imprisoned POL client in Germany. Winston hastily took the overnight train to Canberra, where he persuaded Ministry of Interior officials to grant the man entry.[97] Meanwhile, in Poowong, George had secured pledges of employment for prospective Jewish refugees from local farmers and business enterprises.

But they were largely lone efforts. As in Britain, the prospect of an increased intake was bleak. At best, the Australia of the late 1930s was xenophobic. But it was not, to any mass extent, anti-semitic. Sir John Monash and Sir Issac Issacs had shown that Jewishness was not an impediment to social or professional climbing, for those prepared to assimilate. But more clearly defined Jewish characteristics were frowned upon.[98] Local racists and anti-semitics used them to exemplify their

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[94] For Wilfred's account of the plan see *Passport*, p 133 and *At the Barricades*, p 56. For the contribution made by Benthen see Mark Purcell, *op cit*, p 38

[95] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 135; & *At the Barricades*, p 57.

[96] See an undated letter from George Burchett (Poowong Discussion Club) to the Editor of the Melbourne *Age*, cited by Purcell, *ibid*; & The Melbourne *Age*, 20 June 1939.

[97] Mark Purcell, *op cit*, p 46; & *He Chose Truth*, p 25.

[98] Jewish welfare groups were also supporters of assimilation, fearing that overt displays of foreigness would lead to an increase in anti-semitism. On the 28 May 1942, the *Australian Jewish Herald* suggested to newly arrived German Jews:

> Above all do not speak German in the streets and in the trams. Moderate your voices. Do not make yourselves conspicuous anywhere by walking with a group of persons, all of whom are loudly speaking a foreign language. Remember the welfare of the old established Jewish communities in Australia.

argument that Jews were incapable of fitting in with the Australian way of life. The rabid nationalist and racist, F R (Inky) Stephensen, damned Jews as " a Race Apart" from the "rest of mankind." Writing in the *Australian Quarterly*, Stephensen intellectualised and legitimated anti-semitism. He also dismissed accounts of Nazi atrocities against Jews as "pro-semitic propaganda." [99] His views were shared by the *Bulletin*, which argued that the migration of "lower types" would diminish the racial strain; and by the President of the Victorian Legislative Council, Sir Frank Clarke, who feared that an influx of "rat-faced", malnourished European Jews would "breed a race within a race."[100] Although there was a public outcry against Clarke's comments, a mass influx was an unattractive prospect to the Lyons and Menzies governments. In July 1938, the Lyons Government despatched Colonel T W White to the French town of Evian, where delegates from 38 countries had gathered to discuss the Jewish refugee problem. White emphatically told his fellow delegates that the "Australian Government was not desirous of importing a racial problem or encouraging any scheme of large-scale foreign migration."[101] Between 1933 and 1939 a paltry 7,000 European Jews were admitted to Australia, despite urging from the Australian High Commissioner in London, Lord Bruce, to increase the Jewish quota to 30,000.[102] The Australian effort - per head of population - matched that of the US and Britain, both of which had severely savaged immigration quotas throughout the 1930s in response to the Depression. But for the Jews being herded into Germany's concentration camps, the restrictive quotas were deathly discomforting statistics.

For four weeks after their arrival, Poowong was the home of Adi and Gerda Hammer, and Wilfred was justifiably proud of his hometown's efforts. He told his father that it was "an example to every town and every country of what can be done with energy and true human charity."[103] Of the 104 applications that the Burchett family presented to the Australian government, 36 were successful. An unknown number of Jewish refugees escaped to South Africa and South America because of the efforts of Wilfred and Erna, the London staff of the POL, and the Burchett family in Australia.[104] Gerda Hammer rightly considered the Burchetts as unsung heroes of the Holocaust.[105] They saved her and her husband's life.

Cited by Hiliary C Rubinstein, *The Chosen: The Jews in Australia*, p 176. It should also be noted that Sir Issac Issacs was a trenchant critic of the Zionism and its leading proponent, Dr Aaron Patkin. See Hiliary C Rubenstein, *ibid*, p 206.

[99] F R Stephensen, *The Australian Quarterly*, "A Reasoned Case against Semitism", March 1940, p 59.

[100] Cited by Paul Bartrop, "Good Jews, Bad Jews", from W D Rubenstein (ed) *Jews in the Sixth Continent*, p 181; cited by Hiliary C Rubenstein, *ibid*, p 160.

[101] Cited by Charlotte Carr-Grey, "The Work of the German Emergency Fellowship Committee, 1938-1941", in *ibid*, p 186; and by Andrew Markus , "Jewish migration to Australia 1938-49, *Journal of Australian Studies*, 13, November 1983, p 21.

[102] Hiliary C Rubinstein, *The Chosen: The Jews in Australia*, p 171; and Charlotte Carr-Grey, *ibid*, p 187. In fairness to the Australian Government, it should be noted that the Interior Minister, McEwan, in response to the *Kristalnicht* atrocities, increased the immigration quota to 5,000 per annum over the following three years, of whom 80% were to be Jewish.

[103] Letter from Wilfred to his "Father and Mother and Clive , 9 December 1938, NAA *op cit*.

[104] Mark Purcell, *op cit*, p 42.

[105] Interview with Gerda Hammer, *op cit*.

Chapter 2 The Island

When Wilfred journeyed to New Caledonia on New Year's Eve, 1940, the French colony was a port-of-call for travellers taking the Panama Canal route to Europe. As with its distant neighbour, Tahiti, it was developing a small but robust tourist trade. Furthermore, New Caledonia was attracting investment from French and foreign prospectors, seeking to reap returns from the island's abundant mineral wealth.

For Wilfred, these were secondary considerations. As his ship, the *Flying Fox*, zig-zagged across the Tasman Sea, in order to avoid German naval vessels, he pondered the insular and unworldly Australia he was leaving behind. He considered it "a reflection of Australian parochialism" that it necessitated a war and the fall of Paris to arouse any interest in New Caledonia at all. Unlike his countrymen, to whom New Caledonia was merely "a name", Wilfred was embarking on his third visit to the island. He felt that most Australians were still unaware that a " French metropolis with all the attractions . . . of French life", was only a brief voyage away. There, he contemplated, "one could hear and speak the French language, enjoy French customs and food, and generally imbibe French atmosphere when the size of one's purse didn't permit a trip to the continent." Yet, he lamented, only a "handful" of Australians had heard of the place, let alone ventured to it.[1] He was one of the select few, which set him apart from his less curious, stay-put, countrymen. They were an insular lot, while he was the adventurous cosmopolitan, distinct from those he had left in his wake. Like the New Caledonia he was steaming towards, he sought to be an island, distinguishable from his surrounds.

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When Wilfred and Erna disembarked in Sydney in July 1939, they were shocked by the locals' unworldliness. As Wilfred later recounted, it was difficult for "easy-going, tolerant Australians" to comprehend that Germany had lapsed into the "lower depths of human beastliness." To Wilfred, Australians still pictured Hitler as a "man of peace" and his Germany as a country where "order reigned, trains ran on time, everything was clinically clear, and stories of ill-treatment of Jews and political oppression were grossly exaggerated."[2] There was no sense that Hitler was a "warmonger", or that Germany housed the twin terrors of the *Gestapo* and the concentration camp.[3]

Wilfred and Erna had left a London in which "the official complacency and pretended unawareness" of events in Germany had become "unbearable."[4] Both had witnessed Nazism's barbarities, and were appalled at the appeasement policies of the Chamberlain Government. Wilfred recalled that at the time of their departure, London was still basking "in the after-glow" of the Munich agreement and Chamberlain's "'peace for our time' nonsense.""[5] But Wilfred was convinced Nazism

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[1] Wilfred Burchett, *Pacific Treasure Island*, pp 11-12.
[2] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 136.
[3] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 60.
[4] Wilfred Burchett, *ibid*, p 57.
[5] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, *op cit*.

was on the march, fuelled by Hitler's fixation on *Lebensarum*: the notion that Germany was too small for Germans, and so required more living space at the expense of its neighbours.

In fact, Hitler had already embarked on his quest to reclaim territories that Germany had ceded at Versailles. In March 1936, his troops had marched into the Rhineland. Two years later they stomped into Austria, whilst Hitler plotted the annexation of the Czechoslovak Sudetenland. At the time, Czechoslovakia had an armaments industry the equal of Britain's, while its army rivalled Germany's.[6] Thus, Hitler's annexation would require more bluff than might, especially after the French had reaffirmed their commitment to come to Czechoslovakia's assistance in the event of an attack. But Hitler successfully gambled on Britain and France's unwillingness to go war over the matter. On 29 September 1938 the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, travelled to Munich, where he acquiesced to the *Fuhrer's* demands on the Sudentenland, and signed the Anglo-German Declaration of Friendship, under which each pledged not to attack the other. As Wilfred and Erna were plotting their German itinerary, Chamberlain was returning to Britain, claiming that he had secured "peace for our time."[7] By the time Wilfred was leaving Germany in March 1939, the Nazis had entered Prague, contravening the Munich agreement. By the time of Wilfred and Erna's arrival in Australia, Hitler had annexed Memel from Lithuania, and was eyeing the former German port of Danzig. Though inhabited by Germans, Danzig had been designated a League of Nations' protectorate at Versailles. To the annoyance of the Nazi Government, the Poles had been granted access to Danzig *via* a corridor that traversed German territory. It was just the grievance to fuel populist discontent in the port-city. From 1937 onwards, Danzig's Nazis controlled the port and pushed for its incorporation into the Reich. On 6 April 1939, Chamberlain, fearing that Danzig might spark a European war, signed a pact with the Poles, pledging to assist them in the event of an attack upon their territory. It did little to alleviate tension. As the Burchetts disembarked in Melbourne, they would have noticed newspaper reports speculating on Hitler's plans for Danzig's incorporation into the Reich.[8]

Wilfred, in his memoirs, recalled that the United Australia Party (UAP) governments of Lyons and Menzies were willing accomplices in Chamberlain's policy of appeasement. But this was far too simplistic an explanation. As Patrick Finney suggested, appeasement has been collectively branded "a dishonourable and disastrous policy, entailing craven submission to the threat of force and buying peace at the expense of others." As a result, high moral disdain has clouded more objective insights into the appeasers' limitations of power, which necessitated that they negotiated a "general détente", or "b[ought] time" to prepare for war.[9] Menzies was well aware of the constraints on Australia's power. He believed that Australia's defence depended on the protection of great and powerful allies, most notably the British Fleet based in Singapore. In May 1939 he informed the House that it was "suicidal"

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[6] Peter Calvocressi and Guy Wint, *ibid*, pp 92 & 70.
[7] Cited in *Department of External Affairs, Current Notes*, Volumes 6 & 7, 1939, p 187.
[8] See the Melbourne *Argus*, 20 July 1939.
[9] Patrick Finney, "History Writing and the Origins of the Second World War", in *The Origins of the Second World War* (ed) Finney, pp 12-14. For further discussion on the historiography of appeasement see also Keith Robbins, *Appeasement*, pp 1-8; and A J P Taylor's landmark work, *The Origins of the Second World War* (1964).

for any dominion to pursue a defence policy independent of Britain's.[10] He and his UAP colleagues had loyally cheered Chamberlain's success at Munich. The then Prime Minister, Joseph Lyons, in offering his "warmest congratulations" to Chamberlain, reminded the House that the British Prime Minister had acted with Australia's "support."[11] Menzies echoed Lyons' sentiments, thankful that Chamberlain had kept "the British Empire and Europe out of the war."[12] The Country Party leader and Deputy Prime Minister, Earle Page, was even more laudatory, trumpeting Munich as "inaugurat[ing] a new era of international relations", in which differences "w[ould]l be settled . . . on the basis of reason and justice."[13] None of these men had the benefit of Wilfred's hindsight, yet all remembered the last war, and thought that Australia's defence in any forthcoming conflict would depend on Britain. They acted within their limitations, enthusiastically supporting Chamberlain's efforts to keep the Empire from going to war.

Wilfred, in contrast, was not one for debates on strategic balances, but he had seen the sinister side of Nazism, and was understandably outraged by the Empire's appeasement of Hitler. History, in vindicating his views, undoubtedly added a self-righteous edge to his outrage, which he later turned on his principal antagonist, Menzies. In his memoirs, Wilfred recounted the latter remarking that Germany was "the one truly civilised country in Europe"; and he recalled Menzies' "glowing" accounts of "German godliness, cleanliness and friendliness, and the Hitlerian will for peace."[14] Perhaps Wilfred had also noted Menzies admiration for the "spiritual quality . . . of young Germans" in their devotion to "the service of the state."[15] This was not Wilfred's Germany, with its pogroms and concentration camps.

During the winter of 1939, Wilfred secured a position as a carpentry teacher at Koornong School in Warrandyte, a bushy town on Melbourne's fringes. Perhaps the school's curriculum, with its emphasis on educating the young in the traditions of the pioneers, had attracted him.[16] With the job came a house on the banks of the Yarra River, a welcome addition given the couple's circumstances. As Erna remarked in a letter to a friend, "[o]ur financial position is more then bad", and she was looking for work as a teacher or in a munitions factory.[17] In mid-September, the couple celebrated the birth of their son, Rainer. But the celebrations were tempered by the news that Hitler's troops had entered Poland on 1 September. Britain declared war on Germany and, as a consequence, Australia was also at war.[18]

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[10] *Hansard*, 9 May 1939, Volume 157, p 429.
[11] *Ibid*, 28 September 1938, p 512.
[12] *Ibid*, p 429.
[13] *Ibid*, pp 388-391.
[14] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 58; & *Passport*, p 138.
[15] Menzies speech was made on 8 August 1938 on his return from Britain. It was cited in the *Department of External Affairs, Current Notes*, Vol 5, 1 September 1938.
[16] See Ben Kiernan's "Introduction", in Kiernan (ed) *Burchett Reporting the Other Side of the World*, p xvii.
[17] Extract from Erna's letter to Johanna Kaphan, 11 July 1940: NAA6119/XR1, item 12, folio 9.
[18] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 136.

While at Koornong, Wilfred had written letters to Melbourne's newspapers, detailing his German experiences and warning of the Nazis' impending conquest of Europe. As he later recalled, his efforts were not published. Soon after the declaration, however, Wilfred was summoned by the features editor of the Melbourne *Argus*, Neville Smith. Wilfred's letters had caught Smith's eye, who wanted someone to write newsworthy, first-hand accounts of life in Nazi Germany, to authenticate his paper's position. In the months preceding the declaration, the *Argus* insisted Hitler had to be told that he would "not be allowed to disturb unchecked the peace of the world by methods of bullying and terrorism."[19] But the *Argus* also thought Nazism could be refined. Articles appeared, speculating on rifts within the Nazi hierarchy and the probability of a challenge to Hitler's leadership. Whilst the paper caricatured Hitler as a ranter and raver, it portrayed Hermann Goering as the war hero and country squire, with a keen sense of humour and hideous dress sense. He was a likeable buffoon, and with Churchill and the comedienne, Gracie Fields, numbered amongst the "ten people" that the columnist, A C Brient, most wanted to meet.[20] By late September, the *Argus* was predicting Goering's time had come. According to undisclosed inside sources, a purge of the Nazi leadership was imminent, from which Goering would emerge victorious.[21]

Smith, in preparation for Goering's elevation, wanted Wilfred to write on the *Fuhrer*-in-waiting's lighter side; Goering the popular "family man" and squire who loved nothing better than a good hunt and laugh, and was not "one of the fanatics like Hitler." Wilfred refused. He had seen too much of Nazism, and shared his life with one of its victims, to contemplate writing such "nonsense", and emphatically told Smith that that there was little difference between Goering and Hitler in the minds of decent Germans.[22] On 2 December, an article by Bertram Jebb appeared in the paper's Weekend Supplement, suggesting that Goering, though "not an entirely desirable character", had a "human and clownish" side, totally unlike his messianic boss. His elevation, Jebb suggested, would moderate Nazism, and increase the prospects for peace.[23] The article horrified Wilfred, who set about correcting the misconceptions of his countrymen.

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Around October 1939. Wilfred met with officers from the Department of Information. Recently established as a wartime initiative, the Department managed - or manipulated - news within Australia on the war effort, as well as "counter[ed] enemy propaganda."[24] Wilfred told the officials of his recent spell in Germany, and suggested that "his knowledge . . . might be of use" to them. He mentioned that he had brought back with him "a Nazi atlas." On examining it, the officers suggested that it had the makings of "a valuable article explaining Germany's intentions with regard to world

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[19] The Melbourne *Argus*, 19 July 1939.
[20] *Ibid*, 15 July 1939.
[21] *Ibid*, 22 September 1939.
[22] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 58.
[23] Bertram Jebb, "Hitler's Heirs - A Strange Contrast", the Melbourne *Argus*, 2 December 1939.
[24] Paul Hasluck, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945, Civil; Vol1, The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, pp 383-384.

domination."[25] They also advised him that articles based on any "book or pamphlet issued by the Nazis would be of value." Hence, Wilfred scoured Melbourne's bookshops for items of likely interest.[26]

In late November the results of Wilfred's endeavours began filtering into the press. Drawing on the atlas, Wilfred suggested in the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* that "[i]f maps could conquer nations, the world's Germany's already." Its *autobahns*, he warned, had been built with the ulterior motive of speedily ferrying troops and military equipment into Poland, France and the Low Countries.[27] In mid-December he reworked the theme for the *Age Literary Supplement*, gloomily forecasting that Nazism's strategists were plotting to "control . . . strategic points in all corners of the globe."[28]

Within weeks, however, Wilfred had exhausted local retailers' stocks of pro-Nazi propaganda. In the hope of securing further material from foreign sources, he contacted Andrew Fabinyi, a recently arrived Hungarian émigré who had just joined the publishing house, F W Cheshire. Fabinyi had a solid grounding in European publishing and an abhorrence of fascism. In the early 1930s, he had established an agency in Budapest, specialising in the distribution of British books throughout Hungary. With the prospect of war looming, he left Budapest and eventually landed in Melbourne. He was organising Cheshire's publishing department, when Wilfred approached him about "importing" Nazi propaganda from Germany for use in Information articles. The idea appealed to Fabinyi. While Wilfred would cover the costs of the publications, Fabinyi arranged the necessary contacts.[29]

In late November Wilfred met with Creighton Burns, a Melbourne journalist who had joined Information's editorial staff shortly after the Department's establishment. Wilfred advised Burns that he had taken the liberty of ordering "all publications issued by the German Department of Information", and was concerned about possible problems getting them through Customs' censors. Burns reassured him that if problems did arise, Wilfred was to inform "the censorship people" about the intended uses of the books. If problems persisted, Burns added, Wilfred was to refer the censors to Information for clarification.[30]

In July 1940, a consignment of thirteen books arrived in Melbourne and was immediately impounded by Customs. Wilfred was advised that he had contravened the Customs (Import Licensing) Regulations, by importing the books without securing the necessary permits. To compound matters, he faced possible prosecution under the *Trading with the Enemy Act*.[31] He hurriedly contacted

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[25] Letter from Mr Treloar, Secretary, Department of Information, to the Collector of Customs, Melbourne, 30 October 1939; NAA SP 112/1/1, Item 322/3/9.
[26] Cited in a letter from W G Burchett, East Melbourne, to Mr Taylor, Department of Information, Melbourne, 18 September 1939; *ibid.*
[27] The Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, 26 November 1939.
[28] The Melbourne *Age Literary Supplement*, 16 December 1939.
[29] See "Andrew Fabinyi" by John Hooker, from *A Nation Apart; Essays in Honour of Andrew Fabinyi*, (ed) John McLaren, pp x-xiv.
[30] See the letter from W G Burchett, Beverley Mansions, East Melbourne, to Mr Taylor, Department of Information, Melbourne, 18 September 1940; *ibid.*
[31] See a Department of information "Memorandum" of 23 September 1940; *op cit.*

Information, urging it to "use its position to procure" the books, generously offering to cover any costs incurred in doing so.[32] After examining the list of confiscated books, Information's librarian, Miss Foley, suggested that they "would be of great interest", and recommended that the Department should attempt to procure them.[33] On 21 August Information officials called on the Customs Investigations Branch to discuss the consignment's release, only to be informed that the books had been sent to Defence Military Intelligence.[34]

By now the confiscation of the books and the prospect of prosecution were troubling Wilfred. On 18 September, he wrote to Information seeking to "clarify the position." He stressed that in purchasing the books he had had "no idea . . . that [he] was infringing the . . . Act", but only wanted to warn "the Australian public [of] the aims and methods of the Nazis." He also mentioned the reassurances he had received from Burns. He reminded the Department, that it not only "knew the purpose of the books", but also that Foley and Burns had "emphasised the desirability and importance of obtaining [them]." Though Wilfred was prepared to accept "full responsibility" for ordering them, he considered that Information was obliged - as an accessory - to support his claims of innocence.[35]

In late September, Information referred the matter to Burns who confirmed Wilfred's story.[36] Burns' intercession was timely. An internal memorandum had recommended that the Department "should not have any official connection with the matter" and, therefore, "no further action should be taken" in support of Wilfred and Fabinyi.[37] But, on receiving Burns' comments, the Department revised its attitude. In late October, the Department's Secretary, Treloar, wrote to the Collector of Customs, explaining that Burchett, as a contributor of articles to Information, "would have been justified in believing that if he could obtain further books and . . . prepare further articles, these would have been welcomed by the Department." Treloar emphasised that Burchett's action was motivated by "no other wish, than to . . . render service to this Department."[38] The Collector, however, remained unmoved.

When Wilfred boarded the *Flying Fox*, prosecution seemed inevitable. The Comptroller-General of Customs had "directed that action should be taken against [him]."[39] On his arrival in Noumea, Wilfred was no doubt cheered to hear that Treloar thought it "proper" that Information should send a representative to the trial to support Wilfred's case.[40] The prospect of prosecution undoubtedly

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[32] See note of 9.45 am, Tuesday, 16 July 1940, marked "Miss Foley"; *ibid.*
[33] An undated and unaddressed handwritten note by Miss Foley, *ibid.*
[34] Department of Information minute from Mr W Jones to Mr Taylor, 21 August 1940; *ibid.*
[35] Letter from W G Burchett, Beverly Mansions, East Melbourne, to Mr Taylor, *op cit.*
[36] Memorandum "re W G Burchett" from Mr C Burns, State Publicity Censor, to the Secretary, Department of Information, 28 September 1940; *ibid.*
[37] Department of Information memorandum, 23 September 1940; *ibid.*
[38] Letter from the Secretary, Department of Information, to the Collector of Customs, Melbourne, 30 October 1940; *ibid.*
[39] Letter from James N Silk, Acting Controller of Customs, Victoria, to the Secretary, Department of Information, Melbourne, 14 January 1941; *ibid.*
[40] Department of Information minute from the Secretary, Mr Treloar, to Mr Taylor, 16 January 1941; *ibid.*

sullied his memory of the voyage, and so he wrote of it with the disgruntled superiority of an unjustly condemned man, who had been cast adrift by those he had loyally served. Nothing came of the matter. By mid-1941, there was more interest in the whereabouts of the books, than in prosecuting Burchett and Fabinyi. Information speculated that the books might be with Military Intelligence, somewhere amongst the clogged arteries of the Defence Department, or wrongly shelved at the Australian War Memorial. With the evidence securely lost, Burchett and Fabinyi had no case to answer.

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By the late 1930s there had developed a market for feature articles aimed at prospective and armchair travellers. They were not stories in the old explorer-adventurer mould, such as Jack Hides' escapades in the wilds of New Guinea, but intended for the burgeoning tourist trade. In the intervening years between the wars, a steady stream of travellers had sailed from Australian ports. Though their numbers declined during the Depression, they had, by 1938, returned to their pre-Depression level of approximately 24,000 annually. There were also those bound by circumstance to their armchairs, whose travel yearnings could only be fulfilled *via* descriptive reports from roving correspondents and landscape writers like Frank Clune or Ion Idriess. Presumably, the armchair traveller's imaginative escapes were being increasingly dulled by the "matter-of-fact " requirements of tourist literature.[41] Writers were now familiarising the paths for those travellers that would follow them, advising on local attractions, delicacies and shopping bargains. Adventures were restricted to the occasional rounding of a hairpin bend, incidental trips to the coloured quarters, or uncomfortable rides astride obstinate donkeys.

Wilfred had been on the donkey-trail, and drew on these experiences to carve his niche in the market. On his return voyage from Europe in 1939, he had passed through Madeira and the Azores. As Wilfred later related, these mid-Atlantic islands attracted few visitors. Perhaps he realised on landing that he had the field to himself, and so set to sampling and recording the local way of life. His account was belatedly published in the *Age Literary Supplement* on 31 May 1941. On his Azores "one [was] transported to another world, where many of the ways of life of medieval Europe still persist[ed]." Carts hauled by sheep, goats and the inevitable donkeys, carried the locals and their merchandise, and the occasional tourist with his baggage. For the prospective tourist, the Azores offered the opportunity of experiencing the past, with the reassurance that the present was moored in the harbour, and the future was a few days sailing away. Indeed, there was no need for tourists to totally forsake their luxuries. In Madeira the markets were well stocked with tobacco and trinkets, lace and embroideries, and tasty fish and fine wines. Furthermore, its location was second to none. Wilfred tagged it the "the most perfect jewel of the Atlantic", which undoubtedly put it on tourists' itineraries, and into the imaginations of their less fortunate armchair brethren. Wilfred was one of the many

[41] See Richard White, "The Retreat from Adventure: Popular Travel Writing in the 1950s", *Australian Historical Studies*, No. 109, October 1997, pp 101 & 92.

mappers of their worlds. He was their trail-blazer, which set him apart from those that would follow him. Like the islands themselves, he was distinct from his surrounds.[42]

Mounting international tensions, however, presented Wilfred with an opportunity to move off the donkey-trail and dabble in international affairs, and so he laced his travelogues with comments pertinent to the times. He suggested that Britain should occupy the Azorean port, Ponte Delgado, before the naval war with Germany intensified.[43] He pondered the fate of Madeira if Portugal sided with the Axis powers, and speculated on the place of the fascist Portuguese dictator, Salazaar, in Hitler's "New Order."[44] He also expressed his concerns about the expansionist designs of Horthy's fascist dictatorship in Hungary, and the German dismemberment of Yugoslavia.[45] He worried about the increasing influence of Nazi propaganda in Latin America;[46] and the fate of the brave Tahitians who, in August 1940, had renounced their allegiance to Petain's Vichy Government, siding instead with De Gaulle's Free France. After visiting the island on his homeward voyage, he urged its Polynesian population to forsake the imported civilisation's luxuries and revert to the harder ways of their forefathers who, in the spirit of Wilfred's own forebears, lived off the land."[47] It was the rediscovery of this spirit that would win the war. As he steamed from Suva towards Noumea in mid-1939, he might have contemplated bolstering Fiji's defences against potential enemy designs on its abundant gold deposits.[48] Or maybe the idea came to him later, when he was rummaging amongst his memories for more stories about the places that he had visited, not to mention those he had read about on his travels. For he was quickly running out of places to write about.

In early 1941 travel articles began appearing in the *Age Literary Supplement* under Wilfred's supposed trademark, 'WGB', on places that he had never seen. On 15 February 'WGB' wrote on the Indian city of Puri's festivities in honour of the Hindu goddess, Vishnu.[49] It was followed by another on the Parisian ambiences of Saigon."[50] The writer was not Wilfred, but Winston, who had returned to Australia *via* India and the Orient. Initials can be indecipherable to those unable to fill in the gaps. Names, at least, have some specificity, even if the reader cannot put a face to them. During the early

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[42] Wilfred Burchett, "Vital Outposts in the Atlantic: the Azores and Maderia - New Importance of Peaceful Islands;" the *Age Literary Supplement*, 31 May 1941; & "Maderia - A Beautiful Potential Danger", *ibid*, 1 February 1941.
[43] *Ibid*, 31 May 1941.
[44] Wilfred Burchett, "Portugal's Fears, Hopes and Favours", the *Age Literary Supplement*, 10 May 1941.
[45] Wilfred Burchett, "Hungary Collects Her Booty: Expansion by German Conquest", the *Age Literary Supplement*, 3 May 1941; & "Why Yugoslavia Failed: Long Story of Treachery", the *Age Literary Supplement*, 26 April 1941.
[46] Wilfred Burchett, "United States of South America: Important Moves in Latin Republic - Counter to Nazi Plans", the *Age Literary Supplement*, 7 June 1941.
[47] Wilfred Burchett, "Tahitians and the Simple Life - Isolation Hold No Terrors", the *Age Literary Supplement*, 8 February 1941. In August 1940 the Tahitians voted 5564 to 18 in favour of siding with De Caulle's Free France.
[48] Wilfred Burchett, "Fortunate Isles of Fiji - Wartime prosperity", the *Age Literary Supplement*, 22 February 1941.
[49] 'WGB', "The Religions of India: Changeless Faith and Customs", the *Age Literary Supplement*, 15 February 1941.
[50] 'WGB', "Contrasts in Indo-China: Modern Cities, Ancient Customs", *ibid*.

stages of 'WGB's' career, few would have realised the deception. Thus, the amalgam behind the initials passed unnoticed, as each brother collaborated to further the career of 'WGB.' Perhaps the simple act of initialling their articles bequeathed a hierarchical arrangement, in which Winston Harold was subordinate to Wilfred George. The latter's journalistic career, thus, assumed an importance over the former's, and so Winston, adhering to the hierarchy, might have sacrificed his ambitions for the sake of his brother's. Maybe Winston had lost some of his passion for journalism, though he did later write a lengthy pamphlet with George on India's aspirations for independence.[51] Perhaps Winston's sacrifice increased his stake in Wilfred's career. Through the *Educator* he had seeded Wilfred's journalistic ambitions. When the crop looked like failing, Winston nurtured it with tales drawn from his own experiences, and now he stepped aside to watch it blossom. As the death of 'WGB' suggests, Wilfred was no island. His brother had ably nurtured his career.

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On 11 February 1941 Wilfred, accompanied by Erna, disembarked in Noumea. On his previous visits, he was just a traveller on his way to other, more pressing ports-of-call. On this occasion, however, he was a fully-fledged journalist, carrying accreditation from Australian Associated Press (AAP). The significance of this was not lost on him. As he later related, he was "taking [his] first step abroad as a foreign correspondent", fulfilling his Hammerton's dream.[52]

He was also in New Caledonia on "semi-official" government business. Prior to his departure, Information had asked Wilfred "to keep an eye out for confidential background matter." The Department's Controller of Short Wave Broadcasting, William Macmahon Ball, was particularly interested in Wilfred's trip. Ball, a senior lecturer in Political Philosophy at the University of Melbourne and a noted commentator on international affairs, was responsible for the transmission of wartime information and propaganda over short-wave radio, as well as monitoring similar enemy broadcasts. He considered the Australian press was too reliant on British sources for its news and, hence, the country's foreign policy interests were being scantily presented to an Australian public, blissfully ignorant of the menaces surrounding them. Ball advocated that more "special correspondents, . . . who by capacity and intellectual training were qualified to write interpretative articles", should be posted abroad to cover events from an Australian perspective.[53] Perhaps he saw those attributes in Wilfred, and sought to utilise them to glean the situation on New Caledonia. Presumably, they first met in early September 1939, when Wilfred applied to join Information. His application was still under consideration - 17 months later - when he arrived in Noumea. Nonetheless, he jumped at the opportunity to assist Ball who asked Wilfred to report on "the reception" of the Department's broadcasts, and "the manner in which [they] were received by the people of Noumea."[54]

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[51] See G H & W H Burchett's *Wanted! A New Deal for India*, 1942.
[52] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 143.
[53] W Macmahon Ball, "Australian Press and World Affairs", *Press, Radio and World Affairs: Australia, Outlook* (ed) W Macmahon Ball, pp 15 & 23.
[54] See the memorandum by C E Sayers, Principal Information Officer, Department of Information, 3 March 1941; NAA, SP, *op cit.* For a succinct account of Macmahon Ball's career, including his time

Ball was aware of Wilfred's past visits to the island. In February 1940 the *Age Literary Supplement* had published an account of his 1939 stopover. He and Erna had been stranded there for two weeks, whilst awaiting the settlement of a waterfront dispute. Wilfred had been impressed by the island's "splendid harbours", and its "enormous reserves of strategic minerals such as nickel, chrome and iron ore."[55] He had also been struck by the island's racial mix; the numerous Javanese, Chinese, and Japanese, all of whom had been indentured to work in the mines. One evening Wilfred met a young Frenchman, whose father had just sold his nickel mines to Japanese investors. The Frenchman told him that Germans had originally shown strong interest in the mines, but failed to match the Japanese bid.[56] The meeting left Wilfred disturbed about Japan's potential to influence New Caledonian affairs. His concerns - as expressed in his *Age* article - caught the eye of Cheshires, and on their suggestion, Wilfred returned to Noumea to gather material for a book, intended to warn Australians about the importance of the island to their security.[57]

Undoubtedly, Cheshires' interest was sparked by the fall of France in June 1940, and the strategic vacuum it created on Australia's Pacific-rim. The newly established French Government under Marshal Petain had signed an armistice with the Nazis, which came into effect on 25 June. Meanwhile in London, General Charles De Gaulle had established the French National Committee, and urged his countrymen to rekindle "the flame of French resistance."[58] France's colonies, hence, were confronted with the quandary of siding with either Petain's Vichy-based administration or De Gaulle's Free France resistance. In French Africa, Chad, the Cameroon and the Upper Ivory Coast went across to De Gaulle, while French Indo-China supported Petain. In the Pacific, the New Hebrides' administration under the Resident Commissioner, Henri Sautot, sided with the resistance, as did its distant neighbour, Tahiti, but the Governor of New Caledonia, Georges Pelicier, dithered. On 26 June the locally elected *Conseil-General* had voted to resist the Germans. However, prominent members of the local militia, a substantial number of senior government officials, and some French businesses declared their allegiance to Petain."[59] Pelicier attempted to strike a balance, but got caught in the crossfire. On 10 August the Vichy Minister for the Colonies, Lemery, warned that continued resistance to Germany was an act of treachery.[60] Lemery was clearly concerned about the fence-sitting Pelicier, and despatched the Vichy sloop, *Dumont d'Urville*, from Indo-China to Noumea, with orders to quash movements supporting local autonomy. The sloop's commander, Admiral Toussant, had been told to replace Pelicier with the Vichyite commander of the local militia, Colonel Denis.

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with the Department of Information, see Alan Rix's "William Macmahon Ball 1901-1986 - A Memoir" in *Intermittent Diplomat; the Japan and Batavia Diaries of W Macmahon Ball*, (ed) Alan Rix.

[55] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 142.

[56] Wilfred Burchett, "New Caledonia - Land of Contrasts", The *Age Literary Supplement*, 24 February 1940.

[57] Interview with Wilfred Burchett in Paris on 21 April 1970; tape no, deB 494, Hazel de Berg Collection, National Library of Australia. The interview appears in *Self Portraits*, (ed) David Foster, National Library of Australia, 1991, p 28.

[58] Charles De Gaulle, *The Complete War Memoirs of Charles De Gaulle*, pp 83-84.

[59] Margot Simington, "Australia & the New Caledonian Coup of 1940", *Australian Outlook*, Vol 30, No 1, April 1976, p 80.

A disturbed Menzies Government closely monitored the situation. It was not only concerned about the prospect of having the enemy on Australia's doorstep, but also the likelihood of the Japanese annexing New Caledonia to exploit its abundant minerals. The possibility was discussed by the War Cabinet on 18 June, as was the prospect of an Australian annexation of the island. But the Chiefs of Staff advised against the latter, arguing that an Australian occupying force would be incapable of repelling a Japanese assault. The Chiefs were also worried that an Australian annexation might provoke the Japanese to move on the Dutch East Indies.[61] The War Cabinet was undoubtedly mindful of comments by the Japanese Foreign Minister, Arita Hachiro, about the war in Europe's effect on "the status quo in the Netherlands East Indies."[62] With the fall of the Low Countries to the Germans in mid-May, the War Cabinet had grown increasingly wary of undertaking actions that might provoke a Japanese assault on the resource-rich Dutch colony.[63] On 29 June Hachiro again declared that developments in Europe and "[their] repercussions in the various [Asian] quarters . . . including the South Seas' region . . . were matter[s] for grave concern to Japan."[64] Belatedly, on 6 August, the Minister for External Affairs, John McEwen responded, warning the House that the Japanese were taking advantage of European circumstances to further their "interests" in Asia and the Pacific.[65]

In mid-August Bertram Ballard arrived in Noumea to commence his term as the Australian Government's envoy. A former Melbourne solicitor, Ballard had been based in the New Hebrides since 1934, where he had represented Australian and British diplomatic interests. His new brief was to ensure, unobtrusively, that Pelicier, whilst offering "nominal allegiance to Vichy", was "sympathetically inclined" to the Free French sentiments of the "local populace in regards to continuing the war effort." If the situation deteriorated, and the Vichy Government wanted to oust the governor, Ballard was to suggest the appointment of a deputy acceptable to the wishes of the pro-Free France local assembly.[66] Within a week of Ballard's arrival, Pelicier, on the orders of Admiral Toussant, was replaced by the Vichyite, Denis. The coup, however, coincided with a request from De Gaulle to the Australian Government for assistance in ferrying the New Hebridian Commissioner, Sautot, to Noumea to be installed as governor. On 7 September the Royal Australian Navy's (RAN) cruiser, *HMAS Adelaide*, anchored in the New Hebridian capital, Port Vila, awaiting further instructions. Two days later, Ballard informed Canberra that Denis had rejected a call for a referendum to decide the colony's true allegiance, and ruled against prosecuting the war. Ballard assured Canberra that the people, though by no means unanimous, were in favour of fighting on. His cable was tempered by the ominous suggestion that violence might break out at any time between the 1,200 local Japanese and the French,

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[60] *External Notes*, Department of External Affairs, Vol 6-7, p 190.
[61] Peter Golding, *Black Jack McEwen*, p 102.
[62] Cited by Jonathon Marshall, *To Have and Have Not: Southeast Asian Raw Materials and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp 64-65.
[63] See Paul Hasluck, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945; Civil, The Government and the People*, p 209.
[64] Jonathon Marshall, *op cit*, p 74.
[65] *Hansard*, Vol 164, 6 August 1940, p 187.
[66] Telegram No 5 to Ballard, 29 August 1940; cited by Hasluck, *op cit*, p 304.

providing the necessary pretext for Japan's intervention in the colony's affairs.[67] By that time, Canberra had grown increasingly concerned about Japanese demands on the Vichy administration in Indo-China. By September, Tokyo had secured the right to station 6,000 troops and utilise three air bases in the north of the colony, as part of its effort to rout Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalists in Chungking.

Mindful of these developments, the Menzies Government sought to install Sautot in Noumea. On 19 September, Sautot arrived aboard the Norwegian tanker, *Norden*, and quickly assumed control of the capital. Lurking in the background was *HMAS Adelaide*, which had escorted the tanker from Port Vila. But the *Dumont d'Urville*, was still stubbornly anchored in the harbour. On 24 September, however, the Vichy sloop left for Saigon, and Ballard cabled Canberra that normality had been restored. But his cable did not ease the Government's concerns, as three days later Japan, Germany and Italy signed a mutual co-operation pact. It not only aligned Japan with well-established European belligerents, but also with the French Vichyites, again fuelling speculation in Australia of a possible Japanese annexation of New Caledonia on request from Petain.[68]

By the time of Wilfred's arrival in February 1941, Noumea was supposedly rife with plotters bent on toppling Sautot. Not unexpectedly, visitors were met with suspicion, particularly if accompanied by "a German woman." Sautot had noticed Erna's nationality, and asked Ballard to check with External Affairs in Canberra on the couple's background and Wilfred's claim that he had been "asked to furnish reports to the Department of Information."[69] In early March, Information confirmed that Wilfred was preparing reports for Macmahon Ball, but had no "official status."[70]

At a glance, Wilfred found that little had changed in Noumea. "The same gay crowd" was dockside to greet the boats, and the "Melenesian native boys . . . with their fuzzy mops of bleached hair" still shouldered the passengers' baggage ashore. But there was "a more serious, business-like atmosphere" in the streets, as though Noumeans were "conscious of having shouldered new responsibilities."[71] With the war and coup came fears of invasion and subversion, all exacerbated by the colony's so-called Japanese problem. Wilfred noted that a visitor could quickly gain the impression that "the French had already evacuated in favour of the Japanese." In Noumea's streets were "sleek and prosperous" Japanese merchants, while moored in the island's harbours were Japanese ships brimming with minerals for the armament industries of Kobe and Yokohama. Sautot had recently restricted mineral exports to Japan, diminishing the profits of the colony's merchants and miners who grumbled about the measure. Prominent was the powerful mining conglomerate, *Miniere de l'Oceanie* which, to Wilfred's horror, was backed by Japanese capital, and so more likely to act in the "interests" of its

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[67] Paul Hasluck, *op cit*, p 307.
[68] *Ibid*, pp 310 - 311
[69] Cablegram from B C Ballard, Noumea, to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 24 February 1941; NAA SP 112/1/1 1, Item 322/3/9.
[70] Letter from C E Sayers, Principal Information Officer, Department of Information, to B C Ballard, Noumea, 3 March 1941; *ibid*.
[71] Wilfred Burchett, "In New Caledonia Today - Free and Buoyant Spirit", the *Age Literary Supplement*, 8 March 1941.

financiers, "even if those interests [were] sometimes in conflict with the welfare of the colony."[72] Wilfred pertinently argued that countries which had substantial economic interests in another "tend[ed] to seek political influence - and a day usually arrive[d] when those interests ha[d] to be protected by force."[73] This possibility loomed in New Caledonia. If the Japanese annexed the island, not only would its mineral wealth be lost to Australia, but also its airfields and fine harbours, capable of sheltering a considerable fleet. With the likelihood of a war with Japan, Wilfred urged New Caledonians and Australians to circumvent Japan's economic designs on the island, before the Japanese collected their political dues.

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Wilfred was blessed with a progressive view of history. His perceived that the future belonged not to the Hitlers and Tojos, or the Empire's 'old boy' network, but to 'new worlders' like himself who had been schooled in the ways of their pioneering forebears. The Old World was for yesterday's men: privileged public school old boys and morning-coat imitators. The new was for shirt-sleeved pragmatists - like him - out to stake their claims.[74] There would be no entrenched privileges to keep common men humble and poor. Instead, their "sturdy independence" and "basic rights" would be jealously guarded. The push would come from Pacific-rim countries, such as New Zealand, New Caledonia and Australia, and be ably led by the Americans. They all had "much in common." Their early settlers had either "rejected the Old World, because of its religious and political intolerances and bigotries, or they had been ejected by it, because of their too intense zeal to change it into a world nearer their heart's desire." They "were younger sons of older empires", ushering in societies that wanted equality amongst Pacific peoples.[75]

But not all would share in Wilfred's vision. Though a democrat, he was also a Social Darwinist and son of White Australia. The colour of his history was still white, its roots were on the frontier, and it was tinged with a cultural chauvinism. Equality was to be based *not* on recognising and celebrating cultural diversity, but on moulding all to meet his world's supposed superior requirements. Wilfred, like most Australians, was a supporter of the White Australia Policy. For all of its imperfections, he argued, it had averted "the danger of creating coloured minorities", and so "seemed the most effective means . . . to ensure that decent standards could be preserved."[76] To import lesser types, not prepared to acknowledge the superiority of his heritage, was historically irresponsible, as they threatened the progressive course of his history.

The Melanesians and Polynesians had no place in his world. They were childish and frustrating, but also sources of great amusement. As Wilfred strolled about New Caledonia with his camera, they would strike Napoleonic poses, in anticipation of having their photographs snapped.

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[72] Wilfred Burchett, *Pacific Treasure Island*, pp 148-149 & 59.
[73] *Ibid*, p 154.
[74] *Ibid*, p 222.
[75] *Ibid*, pp 11-13 & 223.
[76] *Ibid*, p 141.

Once Wilfred's "shutter . . . clicked" they would throw up their arms and joyfully whoop, "as all natives seem[ed] to do after their picture ha[d] been taken."[77] Like children, they were inclined to emotional excesses, lacking the controls and refinements of the more developed whites. They also had a predisposition to give into the whims of the flesh far too willingly for Wilfred's comfort. As he listened to band recitals in Noumea's rotunda on Sunday afternoons, he was taken by the *popinees* prowling for men. Once a man entered their sights, "they didn't let him go." Their methods were "primitive" though effective, and totally unlike the "refined" approaches of the white ladies at the town hall's dances and the race-track.[78] There, the head ruled the heart and curbed the loin. There were rules to be obeyed and rituals performed, before conquests could be completed beyond the public gaze. Yet, the more uninhibited ways of the *popinees* itched Wilfred, perhaps reminding him of Natua. If he happened to stop for a scratch, it was not for long. He, after all, was a child of the Enlightenment on a civilising mission.

Wilfred's vision was also materialistic. His ideal landscape was ordered, preferably fenced, and certainly productive. Wilfred was generally disappointed in the labours of New Caledonian farmers. In "the interior" he found "rich land going to waste", while "cleared land" was returning to "scrub through neglect." Poya, however, was the exception, with its "fields of coffee . . . weighed down under the load of close-packed green coffee beans", its "sleek prime cattle" grazing "in the luscious paspalum grass", and the symmetry of its "sheltered paddocks", well-hedged with "feathery, waving masses of banksias." The scene, Wilfred suggested, belonged to "the Rhone Valley rather than the South Seas." It was familiar, pleasantly ordered, gainfully utilitarian, and with all of the hallmarks of the colonisers' success etched into its soils.[79]

It was also the New Caledonia prised from the 'natives.' Wilfred thought that they, like the Australian aborigine, would inevitably die out, leaving the island to the superior, more productive interests of the colonisers.[80] The 'natives' were non-contributors and, therefore, lesser beings, justifying the taking of their lands, and their eventual incarceration on the more barren parts of the island, away from their ancestral homes and burial grounds. By 1877, New Caledonia had 80,000 cattle profitably grazing on appropriated Kanak lands.[81] By the turn of the century, two-thirds of the island was in the hands of the colonisers, who availed of cheap and abundant convict labourers to work their holdings.[82] With the cessation of transportation and the expansion of the economy, demands for labour increased. New sources were found in Indo-China, Java and Japan, and by the late 1920s 14,535 Asian labourers

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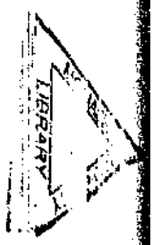
[77] *Ibid*, p 69.
[78] *Ibid*, pp. 191-192.
[79] *Ibid*, p 40.
[80] Though the island's land had been predominantly appropriated for the colonisers' use by 1895, the Melanesian population had increased rather than declined. Alain Saussoi estimates that in 1821, 18,600 Melanesians inhabited the *Grand Terre*. By the time of Wilfred's visit in 1939, the Melanesian population had increased to 28,000. See Alain Saussoi, "The Colonial Chimera: From Annexation to the Re-emergence of Kanak Independence", in *New Caledonia: Essays in Nationalism and Dependency* (ed) Michael Spencer, Alan Ward & John Connell.
[81] Alain Saussoi, *ibid*, p 40.

were working the island's mines and plantations.[83] The 'natives' were left to languish on white-controlled reservations. Wilfred was granted permission to visit a reservation, and was pleasantly surprised to find that despite the 'natives" primitiveness, a pleasing order reigned. He was impressed by the "extreme tidiness and cleanliness" of their solid brick huts, and of the 'natives" attentiveness to hygiene and mastering the "3R's." Indeed, Wilfred considered the 'natives' fortunate, being untroubled by gas or electricity bills, while patriarchal officials kept menacing whites and the demon drink from their doorsteps. He congratulated the authorities on ensuring that the 'natives' had the "the right to live without interference." Though they were not free to leave, they could go about their simple lifestyles, cultivating "taro and ignames, and rearing a few pigs", while they awaited extinction. .[84]

But there was the occasional 'native' success story. Emile was a "huge and squat" Loyalty Islander, employed by M Calimbre: a local businessman, property owner, and member of the New Caledonian establishment. Calimbre's father had made the family's fortune purveying provisions to the convict settlement. His now well-endowed son resided, for part of each year, on his Konienne Island estate, near Pounembout, and had offered to show Wilfred around New Caledonia's more remote mining and pastoral ventures. As a result, Wilfred met Emile, and was immediately won over by his all-round abilities. Nothing seemed beyond him, prompting Wilfred to remark that Emile was the "most amazing man [he] had ever met."[85] He had no schooling, yet managed the estate's affairs during Calimbre's lengthy absences. He was proof to Wilfred that the Kanak was not "stupid, incapable and unwilling to learn", as some had maintained.[86]



Emile had been jokingly dubbed the "High Commissioner of Konienne Island." The title recognised his contributions, but it also kept him in his rightful place; a jocular distance from those who held real power. He was ensnared in the past that the whites had given him and his fellow Kanaks. Despite his obvious attributes, Wilfred cast him as the "perfect caricature of a missionary-filled cannibal." While walking about Calimbre's estate, Wilfred noticed scatterings of bleached bones and skulls, suggesting the probability of "native feasts" in which "a few missionaries or sailors . . . [had] supplement[ed] the shell-fish." Under a particular banyan tree lay a "macabre display" of bones which Emile and his fellow 'natives' respectfully left undisturbed. Wilfred queried Emile about the bones, and was told that they were the remains of tribal members who had "just [got] sick", and not the residue from cannibalistic feasts. But Wilfred was unconvinced. He had come to the estate with preconceived notions about Emile's forebears and their less palatable, though undeniably curious, diets and practices. In his view, only "the banyan tree with its treasure of human bones could tell" the real

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[82] John Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky: The Political History of a French Colony*, Pacific Monograph No 16, p 72.
[83] Alan Ward, "Labour Policy & Immigration", in Spencer, Ward & Connell, *op cit.*, p 82.
[84] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, pp 135 & 138.
[85] Wilfred Burchett, "On Tour in New Caledonia - Land of Plenty and Peace", *The Age Literary Supplement*, 22 March 1941. The article appeared as the work of the *Supplement's* "Special Correspondent."
[86] Wilfred Burchett, *Pacific Treasure Island*, p 40.

tale.[87] The tree's suggestive silence was heard above Emile's declaration of his forebears' innocence. It was the condemnatory silence of the dominant history, crafted by the colonisers. Their's was the more admirable past. Emile's, in contrast, was primitive and savage, and so his voice was not audible above the tree's silent din.

In 1878, the 'natives' revolted, doing "immeasurable harm", according to Wilfred. White settlers were killed, about 200 homesteads pillaged, and crops and machinery destroyed. "Years of labour", Wilfred remarked, "vanished over night." He considered it a damaging outburst of primitivist petulance, though not without a modicum of justification. The 'natives' led by their tribal chief, Atai, had been pushed from their lands, and seen their burial sites irreverently turned into pastures and plantations. To the materialistically minded Wilfred, such ancestral attachments were "over-cultivated."[88] Though he did acknowledge that the 'natives' had some justifiable grievances, he thought that humankind was better served by the land's appropriation for more reasonable pursuits. The revolt failed when the colonists won the support of Atai's numerous tribal enemies. Atai has since been mythologised as the Kanaks' first fighter for independence.[89]

In 1919 the natives again revolted under Noel. From Wilfred's account, Noel was a bestial type. When he was finally cornered by his pursuers, he fought on with "unbelievable strength", and was only subdued after being shot several times. M Ratzel commanded the colonial administration's suppression of the revolt, and Wilfred noted his report when substantiating his own low views on 'native' discontent. Ratzel remarked that throughout the revolt the 'natives' took on "almost animal characteristics when on the trail of human prey." They "loped through the bush, their heads darting this way and that, nostrils dilating, as they sniff[ed] the air exactly like bloodhounds."[90] They were animalistic and instinctive, not rational and human, and certainly uncivilised. Indeed, their revolt was another of primitivism's assaults on civilisation, and so its suppression was well justified, as it rid the island of its baser instincts. Perhaps Ratzel's report further blinkered Wilfred's view of the 'natives.' He thought them too "truculent" to be good labourers, and disinclined to "give up the simple pleasures of fighting tribal wars and dancing 'pilou-pilous' . . . to go and labour on the white man's plantations."[91] They were presumably better off on their reservations, out of harm's way, leaving the whites to get on with the real business of running the colony.

For Wilfred, the real revolt occurred in September 1940. Unlike the 'natives" efforts, this revolt sought not to rupture the rationally ordained order, but to advance it. Wilfred considered it inconceivable that Europe's "most politically minded people", the French, could fall for "the semi-mystic figure into which the Vichy propagandists ha[d] turned Marshal Petain." The French, after all, were "heirs" to a revolutionary "tradition", foundered on "*liberte, egalite et fraternite*", which would

[87] *Ibid*, pp 46-47 & 50.
[88] *Ibid*, pp 129-130.
[89] For an account of the 1878 rebellion see John Connell, *op cit*, pp 59-72.
[90] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 135.
[91] *Ibid*, p 82.

inevitably turn on the Vichyites. The New Caledonians' September coup had prodded revolutionary traditionalists on their responsibilities to that past.[92]

Wilfred's revolt was also a rollicking yarn: a snappily paced adventure, full of conspirators and intrigues, and likeable heroes and dastardly villains. Pelicier and Denis were the yarn's arch villains. Wilfred's Pelicier was not the fence-sitter of Ballard's communiques, but rabidly Vichyite with all the associated fascist trappings. He had arrogantly ignored the will of the island's democratically elected *Conseil-General*, in his refusal to support its decision to side with Free France and, instead, secretly consolidated his links with Petain. Pelicier had also banned public demonstrations, imprisoned those who questioned his authority, and spurned a people's petition requesting greater autonomy for the colony.[93] In an "act of lamentable weakness", Wilfred's Pelicier deserted the island in the dead of night, after a bomb had been hurled at his house.[94] He lacked the spine for the job - the moral courage to act in the interests of the people - and, as a consequence, turned his back on the island, when he was no longer assured of either power or safety.

Wilfred's Denis was another weak-kneed villain: "a coward [who] masquerad[ed] as a military strongman." On being told that Sautot's ship was *en route* to Noumea, Denis lapsed into indecision. On hearing that Sautot was ashore, the so-called "strongman" went to pieces. According to Wilfred, the once "stern soldier . . . broke down and cried like a little child, threatening to commit suicide."[95] Nonetheless, he quickly regained his composure, hurriedly leaving the Governor's residence *via* the back fence, in order to avoid the mob on his doorstep calling for the installation of Sautot. Like Pelicier, he sailed from Noumea when neither his power nor safety could be assured.

In Wilfred's opinion, Sautot installation was a victory for Free France and his ideal type - the "New Caledonian . . . man-in-the-bush."[96] Together, they had rekindled the revolutionary sparks of 1789 and 1848, and, most importantly of all, the Paris Commune of 1871. The lattermost was a proud part of the island's revolutionary lore. In early 1871, the German army had encircled Paris. The French Government under Adolfe Thiers promptly - and perhaps realistically - surrendered, re-positioning itself behind the German lines at Versailles. The more radical Parisians, however, elected their own assembly and chose to continue the war. Wilfred considered it "one of the most dramatic episodes in the whole frustrated history of the French", as "working people . . . ma[de] themselves masters of their fates." In reality, the Commune's assembly was overwhelmingly bourgeois.[97] But Wilfred was tailoring the past to suit the needs of his present, which required more common man heroes, acting in the spirit of the *Communards*. He admired heroic gestures, regardless of their worth, and so

[92] Wilfred Burchett, "The Next French Revolution - France's Story Since 1789", the *Age Literary Supplement*, 12 July 1941.
[93] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 195.
[94] *Ibid*, p 203.
[95] *Ibid*, p 211.
[96] *Ibid*, p 215.

condemned Thiers as the precursor of Petain, Pelicier and Denis. Each was a coward rather than a fighter; and each was prepared to abuse their power to silence dissenters. Thiers' army crushed the Commune on 28 May, 72 days after it had been established. Approximately 25,000 *Communards* were executed, and another 38,572 arrested. Of the 10,137 who were convicted, almost half were transported to New Caledonia.[98]

Amongst them, was the radical journalist, Henri Rochefort. A "Chaplinesque figure and one-time minor public servant" to his detractors, he was a hero to Wilfred, rivalling Kisch. Rochefort had taken advantage of Napoleon III's relaxation of censorship restrictions in May 1868, to publish a satirical pamphlet, *La Lanterne*, in which he lampooned the Emperor and his court. At its peak, *La Lanterne* had a circulation of 120,000, but legal action suppressed it, and Rochefort fled to Brussels, where he continued publishing his punchy satires in relative safety.[99] By early 1871, he was back in Paris, and was elected to the Commune's assembly. Wilfred sweepingly stated that Rochefort was not only the intellectual hero of the Commune, ignoring Victor Hugo's more substantial claims, but also was "an outstanding journalist of his day." With the Commune's collapse, Rochefort was arrested, tried and transported to New Caledonia, where he did not languish for long. In Wilfred's eyes, he was a selfless advocate for common man causes, and whilst on the island assiduously plotted his return to France, to continue his work. He eventually did so, and continued railing against "the injustices rampant in the age in which [he] lived." [100] Rochefort, like Kisch, was the journalist whom Wilfred aspired to become: the questioner of entrenched privileges, the challenger of unjust authorities, and the outsider apart from the ruck.

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On 8 December 1941, *Pacific Treasure Island* was published, and shortly afterwards reviewed in the Melbourne *Argus*. The review suggested Burchett had presented "material for furious thinking by every Australian", though the book also had its faults. Not enough "consideration" had been given to New Caledonia's "strategic importance in relation to the Commonwealth", which in the "existing circumstances . . . might [have] been the prime motive of [the] book."[101] The Japanese and Americans had just entered the war, increasing the island's significance to Australia, and dating the focus of the book. By this time, however, Wilfred had embarked on his greatest journey yet.

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[97] *Ibid*, pp 105 & 108. See also Theodore Zeldin's *France 1848-1945; Politics & Anger*, p 374. Zelden indicates, 25 artisans were elected to the municipal council, in comparison to 65 representatives of the bourgeoisie.
[98] Zeldin, *ibid*, p 380.
[99] See Rupert Christiansen, *Paris Babylon - The Story of the Paris Commune*, p 123.
[100] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, pp 105 & 122.
[101] The Melbourne *Argus*, 13 December 1941.

Chapter 3 The Road

The road started in the northern Burmese town of Lashio, snaked its way through the mountains towards the Chinese border, and meandered on through Yunnan to the provincial capital, Kunming. From there it was a comparatively straight but lengthy run to China's interim capital, Chungking. When Daniel Arnstein, a New York cab fleet owner, was contracted to survey the road in early 1942, he found that at no point could a driver see more than 200 yards ahead. He also noted that the road's width varied from between nine to sixteen feet, and that its many suspension bridges could only take one truck at a time. Travel speeds rarely exceeded 15 miles per hour, and impatient drivers hastened at their peril, for the road clung to cliff faces with drops of between 100 to 700 feet. Arnstein learned that since the road's opening in 1938, 1300 trucks had gone over its side.[1] By late 1941 the Burma Road was not only the high road to China, but also the main supply line into *Kuomintang*-held Chungking.

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In July 1937, the Japanese moved beyond the borders of their puppet state, Manchuko, and marched on the rest of China. By September Chiang Kai-shek's *Kuomintang* forces had retreated from their capital, Nanking, leaving it to be 'raped' by Japanese troops. By October 1938, Canton had fallen, and the Japanese controlled the Chinese coastline. British, American and French trading concessions were surrounded and increasingly harassed by the Japanese. Consequently, relations deteriorated, as the latter blockaded the British concessions at Canton and Tientsin, and challenged the other concessionaries' trading rights. Chiang, meanwhile, had retreated to the Szechwanese capital of Chungking. Landlocked and isolated, his government's survival depended upon the Burma Road and the railway from the Indo-Chinese port of Haiphong to Nanning. In November 1939, the Japanese attempted to cut the Haiphong line, and by February 1940 were regularly bombing its bridges. By September the Japanese had signed the tripartite pact with Germany and Italy, each recognising the other's sphere of influence; and by the following June, the Japanese Prime Minister, Prince Konoye, was demanding the British Government withdraw its garrison from Shanghai, and close the Hong Kong border and Burma Road. Not wanting to fight another war on a more distant front, the British - firmly supported by Menzies - closed the road in June. By late September Chiang was totally isolated, after the Vichy Government granted the Japanese use of Haiphong. But on 18 October the road re-opened, as American and British relations with Japan frayed, and Roosevelt and Churchill realised the value of a supportive Chinese rear in any forthcoming conflict with Japan.[2] Thus, the Road was reinvented. The *Sydney Morning Herald* proclaimed it "a symbol of our refusal to retreat any further in the face of threats."[3] No longer was the road a victim of appeasement or indicative of weakness, but a stout symbol of resistance to Japanese aggression.

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[1] George Kent, "Removing the hold-ups on the Burma Road", the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, 20 January 1942

[2] See Paul Hasluck, *Australia in the War of 1939-45, Civil: The Government & the People*, pp 493-494.

[3] "Burma Road", Editorial, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 October 1941.

In 1939 the Australia-China Association had been established. Consisting of empathetic journalists, clergymen and trade unionists, it sought to enlighten Australians about China, and garner support for its struggle against the Japanese. In 1940, the Association published the pamphlet, *China Marches On*, a heroic account of Chiang's westward retreat to Chungking. It was followed by the equally fervent, *Building China's Republic: Epic of Vision, Valour and Victory*. Penned by the Association's publicist, George Burchett, the pamphlets appeared at a time when pro-Chinese sentiments were rarely voiced, particularly by members of the Lyons and Menzies governments who were content to appease the Japanese at China's expense.[4] In 1938 Menzies, as Attorney-General, had enforced the *Transport Workers Act* to break an export ban on pig iron to Japan imposed by the Waterside Workers' Federation. Wilfred later accused Menzies of "tying China's hands and feet [and] trying to force her to her knees in the face of Japanese aggression."[5] George and the Association undoubtedly kindled these sentiments and Wilfred's interest in China. So it was no surprise to find him sitting and writing in a train carriage at Rangoon Station in October 1941. With advances from a publisher and several newspapers, he was off to the Lashio railhead in northern, Burma and onto the road.[6]

As the train jolted northwards he watched and wrote with a travel writer's eye peeled for exotic details. He was a white scribe fearlessly going where few whites had gone before and was intent on leaving his record. Another white was making the trip; an American Baptist missionary off to convert the Shan. He reckoned there were head-hunters in the hills beyond the road. From Rangoon to Mandalay, the country was flat, "uninteresting" and unheroic. North of Mandalay the train climbed towards the hill-station of Maymyo and forests of teak. Looking back, Wilfred saw the "sluggish, muddy ditch" of the Irrawaddy River, winding through "interminable plains of paddy." Gradually, the heat and humidity of the plains gave way to temperate Maymyo and its comforting familiarity. That night, there were blankets on his bed "and real milk in [his] tea." But beyond Maymyo civilisation abruptly ended, as the train entered forests inhabited by the "primitive" Kachin and Shan tribes. At Hsipaw, the missionary alighted, and Wilfred was "left alone with a hundred-odd Mongol tribesmen and Indian coolies." That night, a wary guard told him to lock his door. Wilfred watched as the Mongols tuck into a greasy sauce dish with their hands, and noted that he was amongst primitives who had not yet "adopted" chop-sticks. Children crowded around him and his typewriter, and he wrote that they were "more primitive than [those] . . . in the more cultivated southern states."[7] As he wrote on, the frontier became more menacing, and he became the heroic traveller of his own tale.

Lashio, in contrast, was indicative of the progress that the road had brought to this backwater. It was a "boom town", reminiscent of the Wild West or gold rush towns of Wilfred's imagination. The road had transformed Lashio from a bamboo village into a "world transportation centre, with goods from the seven seas passing through its winding streets in an unceasing stream." Between 1,500 and

[4] Lachlan Strahan, *Australia's China*, p 20.
[5] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 140.
[6] *Ibid*, p 144.
[7] *Ibid*.

2,000 trucks motored from Lashio daily for Chungking. In the streets private trucking operators pocketed fast fortunes from ferrying commercial goods for fellow-profiteers, instead of supplies for China's war effort. Wilfred noted some "cheating", but it was done "in a more friendly spirit than in any place I know." A taxi driver tried to over-charge him, but merely smiled when Wilfred called him a "thief." The Shan, however, wandered about "bewildered" amidst the dramatic changes. In the town's market, they and the old villagers "touched and fingered", and looked at "things never dreamed of before", as though marvelling at the newcomers' cleverness. The villagers had no place in this new, marvellous Lashio. Wilfred watched as they attempted to retake the road with their bullocks. But the trucks pushed them aside on their way to Chungking.[8]

Wilfred followed them, initially by car and later on the back of a mail truck. He noticed other Lashios springing up along the road. Once mapless villages were now named, plotted and known, and servicing the road's travellers and their civilisation. He watched peasant-workers breaking rocks and carting mortar for the road, but they paled against the changes that the road had brought. In later years Wilfred would pride himself on reporting significant historical events. On the road, he watched and perceptively noted a humbler passing of time. Life in its original, primitive state could be still glimpsed. But old crafts had been reconditioned to meet the demands of the newcomers. Village blacksmiths, who before the road had not seen a truck, were panel-beating and maintaining engines. As Wilfred motored towards Kunming, the fusion of old with new was constantly apparent. He saw a coolie carrying a Singer sowing-machine, and amidst the trucks, two men hauling a sow and a pony train stacked with cotton bales. Chinese soldiers also marched by, heading towards the Burmese border, and villagers and truck-drivers cheered them on their way. The soldiers were slightly built, "efficient-looking . . . and well-equipped", and like the road itself, symbols of China's modernisation.[9] They were also reminders that at the end of the road was Chungking, the world's most bombed city. When Wilfred reached the Yangtze River and looked across at the city, he was still a traveller who wrote. Within weeks he was a war correspondent.

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Throughout 1943 Wilfred revisited the road in his mind. He was writing *Bombs Over Burma,* and the experience of war had given the road a hard-bitten edge. Now, it had a menacing though licentiousness air, uncomfortably prickling the moral 'straightener' within him, yet luring him on. The road still had a Wild West streak, but its truck drivers were now lawless and greedy, selling their Lend Lease cargoes on the black market, thereby imperilling Chungking and the war effort. The drivers "swaggered" about Lashio with "pistols and revolvers of every description ostentatiously bulging out of their hip pockets", and crowded into the roadside brothels and bars that had replaced the blacksmiths and villagers of Wilfred's earlier road. Lashio was now a temptress of a town, where bare breasted tribal women mingled with Burmese girls in their "light blouses, transparent enough to hint at

[8] Wilfred G Burchett, "A Boom in Burma - Lashio's Sudden Prosperity", *The Age Literary Supplement,* 27 December 1941.
[9] Wilfred G Burchett, "China on the March: Kunming to Chungking - A New Life Line", *The Age Literary Supplement,* 21 February 1942.

shapliness beneath." At night prostitutes of all "races and colours" walked the roadside and Lashio's streets, or consorted in shadowy doorways.[10] This town and road were not the work of the wanderlust writer but the war correspondent, colouring his past with grittiness to embellish his new, derring-do self.

As Wilfred recounted in *Bombs*, he first saw Chungking on an October evening in 1941, and remembered it as "a dreamscape", with its tiers of white buildings rising from the river, before dissolving into the mist. As he crossed the river, he realised that the buildings were "windowless, roofless, backless shells", the pockmarks of Japanese bombing. He recalled his horror at the sight, after which he disembarked into his "dreamscape."[11] He would have climbed the narrow, muddy laneways of old Chungking, enclosed by gutted buildings. Outside the city's walls he would have seen the refugees who had swelled Chungking's population fourfold. Within days he would have praised the fog that kept the Japanese bombers away, experienced the blackouts, smelt the sewerage, cursed the lack of running water, and perhaps suffered his first bout of dysentery. On a clear day he would have crowded into a cliff-side cave above the Yangtse, waiting for another Japanese bombing raid to pass.[12] This Chungkin· was a product of war and suffered because of it. But it was also Wilfred's "dreamscape." As he later remembered and wrote of it, and the war outside its walls, he reinvented himself as the hero, amidst a formidable array of other heroes.

The crusty, hard-living correspondent, Jack Belden, was one of them. Brilliant but temperamental, Belden had been in China since 1933, and was a confidante of Chiang Kai-shek's military adviser, the American general, 'Vinegar' Joe Stilwell. Belden would later retreat from Burma with Stilwell, and write a lively account of it. He was also notorious for sitting alone in his room for days at the press hostel with the shades drawn, drinking himself senseless. But on the evening before news of Pearl Harbour broke, Wilfred recalled in *Bombs* that he and Belden were sitting "gloomy and surly" in one of Chungking's inexpensive pavement cafes. Each's mind was on the prospect of war with Japan, but dared not mention it. They sat as equals. Wilfred, like Belden, was a war correspondent, hardening to the life. His report on the rumoured use of germ warfare by the Japanese at Changteh had appeared in the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*. His despatches had also made the London *Daily Express*, though under the name of 'Peter Burchett', the result of neglecting to attach 'Wilfred' to a cable. Belden ordered green tea, whisky and a "flowery virgin", but found the price of the lattermost too high. As they wandered back to their quarters Belden asked Wilfred if he thought "the Japs really [meant] it this time?" The expert was asking the novice. Wilfred remembered and wrote of that night because he was in famous company at an infamous time and place.[13] He was six weeks into the job and yet to visit his first battlefield. But he wrote in *Bombs* with a war-wearied hard-bitten edge.

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[10] Wilfred Burchett, *Bombs Over Burma*, p 86.
[11] *Ibid*, pp 11-12; & *Democracy With a Tommy-Gun*, p 17.
[12] See Warren Osmund, *Frederick Eggleston: An Intellectual in Australian Politics*, pp 209-210
[13] Wilfred Burchett, *Bombs Over Burma*, pp 11-12; & "Germ Warfare by Japanese", the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, 26 November 1941.

For young 'comers', Chungking was the place to be, if one was not in North Africa with the illustrious Alan Moorehead or covering the Russian front. A youthful Theodore White was in Chungking, already making his mark as *Time's* China correspondent. So too was the well-established Harrison Forman of the London *Times*, and the *Sydney Morning Herald's* Roderick McDonald, fresh from the Japanese rout of Hong Kong. Leland Stowe of the *Chicago Daily News* and the United Press' Mac Fisher also passed through, the latter "brimming over with inside 'dope'", according to Wilfred.[14] The beautiful, leftist-leaning American journalist, Betty Graham, came and stayed, as did countless others. Most bunked down at the notoriously primitive press hostel or "bughouse."[15] When the very particular English journalist, Violet Cressy-Marcks, spent a night there, she complained to the Australian Ambassador, Sir Frederick Eggleston, that "there [was] no proper heating, no proper baths [and] grim food", and rats had "nibble[d] away at her facial cold cream" while she slept.[16] Wilfred remembered no such discomforts in *Bombs* and, indeed, relished the hostel's drinking sessions and boisterous dinners, and swapping gung-ho yarns with his more senior colleagues. But they were still fleshless names to him, each 'dropped' to bolster his fledgling reputation.

Other important figures also flew in. The British Commander-in-Chief in India, Sir Archibald Wavell, and his American counterpart, Major-General George Brett, arrived in late December for discussions with Chiang on the establishment of the Allied Military Council. At an impromptu airfield briefing, Wavell asked Wilfred for his thoughts on the war, which the latter willingly and expansively gave.[17] Wilfred also dropped in on Eggleston at the Embassy. Their families had attended the same Methodist church in the Melbourne suburb of Brunswick, and Wilfred and Sir Frederick shared a common acquaintance in Patkin.[18] Others on Wilfred's visiting list included the Vice-Minister for Information, Hollington Tong - or "Holly" to his mates - and 'Lousy' Peng, the director of Radio Chungking. 'Lousy', Wilfred gloatingly recalled, "invited me to . . . tell the world how Chungking reacted to the outbreak of war in the Pacific."[19] Tong, however, was the more commanding figure, controlling the movements of foreign journalists and scrutinising their despatches to ensure that China was heroically portrayed. The communist, Chou En-lai, was also in town, and Wilfred "found anything he had to say well worth the trouble of a trip to his headquarters." Chou had integrity, "a fine logical, analytical mind", and was an "unwavering" supporter of Chiang and the *Kuomintang*.[20] But he was also another of *Bomb's* fleshless characters, lost amidst Wilfred's name-dropping.

In early 1942 Wilfred and half-a-dozen of his western colleagues were granted permission by Tong to visit the battlefields around Changsha. The Japanese had launched an offensive on the city, which had been repulsed by the Chinese. In *Bombs*, Wilfred recounted a "terrific lunch" with the

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[14] Wilfred G Burchett, *Bombs Over Burma*, pp 18 & 32.
[15] Alfred & Valerie Wagg, *A Million Died*, p 87.
[16] Cited by Warren Osmund, *op cit*, p 212.
[17] Wilfred G Burchett, *op cit*, p 28.
[18] Warren Osmund, *ibid*.
[19] Wilfred Burchett, *ibid*, p 14.
[20] Wilfred G Burchett, *ibid*, pp 23-24: & "Warning Against Chinese Munich", the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, 5 December 1941.

victors, and being feted later at a dinner, where he made a speech that was carried in the Chinese press.[21] He also remembered the battlefield. It was his first, and was covered with Japanese corpses, some of whom had been mutilated by vengeful Chinese peasants. In Changsha's streets, bodies of Japanese soldiers hung on hooks, split from head to crutch "like a pig or sheep hanging in a butcher's window." The Japanese had fled towards the Luiyang River, where Wilfred found the dismembered remains of horses and soldiers. He was surprised "at the little emotion [he] felt", and hoped his reaction would have been different had the corpses been "men of my own race."[22] That night, a bayonet-happy Chinese guard confronted Wilfred and Forman. The guard was a "wild figure", baring his teeth and snarling, and "letting out an unearthly yell." He "looked more like a ferocious animal than a man", Wilfred recalled. Wilfred had still not entirely crossed the racial divided into China. He still considered some Asians lesser beings.[23]

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Changsha and the Sino-Japanese War, in general, were of secondary interest to Australian and British newspaper editors, and their readers. There were more pressing fronts in North Africa, Russia, and elsewhere in Asia, as well as the problems of publishing more news with less resources. The *Daily Express* was particularly pushed, as wartime rationing had substantially reduced the broadsheet's size. When compounded with an editorial policy of publishing stories comprehensible to the "people of Derby and Rhyll", there was obviously scant interest in despatches from distant Chungking.[24] Though Changsha had been a notable though moderately reported victory, it was unlikely - as an *Argus'* strategist noted - to "affect . . . the war in the western Pacific", or "prevent the Japanese capture of Singapore."[25] Undeterred by Changsha, Japanese forces were pushing south into the Malay Peninsula and fanning towards Burma, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies. In early January, Manila and Hong Kong fell, and the Japanese set their sights on Singapore. By mid-January, they were bombing the port, and had captured Kuala Lumpur; and by February were in the islands to the north of Australia. In the meantime, they had started their march into southern Burma from Thailand, securing Moulmein *en route* to the Salween River and Rangoon.

Before Wilfred's departure for the Changsha front, he had asked the *Express* about the possibility of covering Burma. Officially, his patch was China, but he was concerned about its diminishing importance. As Chinese troops were being sent to bolster British defences in Burma, Wilfred requested to cover their campaign. On the evening before his departure for Changhsa his request was granted.[26] The experienced South African, O D Gallagher, had been the *Express* correspondent in Burma. He had earned his reputation covering the Abyssinian War in the mid-

[21] Wilfred G Burchett, *Bombs Over Burma,* pp 40-41 & 50-51.
[22] *Ibid,* pp 47-52; & p 45.
[23] *Ibid,* p 53.
[24] Arthur Christiansen, *Headlines All My Life,* p 2.
[25] S A Roberts, "American Giant Prepares While East Asian Position Deteriorates", the Melbourne *Argus,* 10 January 1942.
[26] See Wilfred G Burchett's "Chinese Fighters Wear Huge Hats", the Sydney *Daily Telegraph,* 4 January 1942; & "Chinese Pour into Burma", the Sydney *Daily Telegraph,* 20 January 1942.

1930s.[27] More recently, he had survived the sinking of the battleship, *Repulse*, off Singapore and numerous air raids on Rangoon. As the Japanese advanced into southern Burma, Gallagher decided to quit journalism and enlist in the British Army. Hence, Wilfred was appointed the *Express's* Burma correspondent.[28]

The Burma he entered in early February was indefensible. The British Government had granted Burma limited autonomy in 1937, but had not invested in its infrastructure or defence. In the weeks after Japan's entry into the war, Burma's defences had been bolstered by the arrival of the 17th India Division; a quickly cobbled together force that had been declared unfit to face a first-rate enemy by the Director of Military Training.[29] To compound matters, the pro-independence *Thakim* Party had sided with the Japanese who were also secretly funding the anti-British Burma Independence Army. By the time of Wilfred's arrival, the Japanese were closing on the Salween River and in striking distance of Rangoon. Yet thousands of Chinese troops remained on the country's northern frontier. Enraged by the seeming reluctance of the British military to deploy the Chinese, Wilfred despatched a story that almost got him barred from Burma before he was established.

His recollection of the story in *Bombs* and its ramifications was a curious mixture of fact with self-aggrandisement. When Wilfred crossed the border from China into Burma at Kyuhkok he noticed arches had been erected welcoming the Chinese troops. He recalled that a British officer, MacDougall, had told him that the authorities had initially blocked the construction of the arches, but reneged when confronted by indignant local Chinese. The Burmese police, however, had not been advised of the change. When construction resumed, the police intervened, and a confrontation followed Though the arches were finally built, relations between the police and local Chinese community had supposedly deteriorated.

Wilfred wrote on the incident and the mounting restlessness of the Chinese troops to get to the front. He mischievously noted that the troops felt "unwanted" in Burma, and suggested they should be sent to more accepting fronts.[30] As the story related to China, Wilfred cabled it to the censor in Chungking for clearance. He then hurried onto Rangoon for an interview with the British Governor, Dorman-Smith. According to *Bombs*, the Governor was keen to hear a first-hand account of the situation on the border, and the "gossip drifting back from Lashio to Chungking about our treatment of the Chinese." Dorman-Smith also wanted to know why the Chinese were not in Burma already. Wilfred apparently told him of British and American fears that the Chinese, once ensconced, might prove difficult to dislodge. Based on Wilfred's views, Dorman-Smith cabled Lashio "ordering that everything possible be done to make the Chinese . . . feel welcome in Burma." In gratitude, he issued Wilfred with a "chit" for supplies, so as he could follow the fortunes of the Chinese campaign. Wilfred

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[27] For details of Gallagher's exploits in Abyssinia, where he provided his fellow correspondent, Evelyn Waugh, with much material for his satirical novel, *Scoop*. Phillip Knightley's *The First Casualty*, pp 172-177.
[28] Wilfred G Burchett, *Bombs Over Burma*, p 129.
[29] Raymond Callahan, *Burma 1942-45*, p 32.

left triumphant though annoyed at "the absurd, defeatist ideas that the [British] army seemed to have about the quality of the Chinese troops."[31] According to *Bombs*, he had single-handedly got them moving to the front.

But the official version differs, markedly. In early February, MacDougall had been informed that Burchett had "smuggled" a cable out of Burma for "transmission" from Chungking. The latter's censors had passed the cable to Rangoon, where it had been rejected with the recommendation that Burchett's accreditation should be withdrawn for attempting to evade censorship.[32] As Burchett's cable dealt with the incident at Kyuhkok, MacDougall was asked for his account, and suggested that it was not as serious as Burchett portrayed, but merely a misunderstanding between an ignorant or corrupt Indian policeman and the arch builders. It would have passed unnoticed, he added, if people were not out to make trouble", and had been "amiably" settled before "Burchett's gaffe." Furthermore, for Burchett to suggest that the Chinese troops were not wanted in Burma was "a flagrant lie." Their movements were determined not by the British, but Chungking, of which Burchett was well aware.[33]

Dorman-Smith had apparently discussed the matter with Burchett during their Rangoon meeting, and had shown him a cable recommending the withdrawal of his accreditation.[34] Burchett limply explained that he had not expected the story to get passed the censors or be published. It was only intended to raise the authorities' awareness of the real situation on the border.[35] In the end, Burchett's accreditation was not withdrawn. External Affairs in Canberra was advised that the seriousness of the offence warranted it, but "because of a shortage of Australian journalists there was no one to replace him."[36] Wilfred recast the incident to mask his dressing-down behind the facade of his own self-importance.

The incident doubtlessly clouded Wilfred's view of the colonial administration and military command, though he never held either in high esteem to begin with. Wilfred considered their officers rigidly minded, class-ridden and xenophobic, with little time for the welfare of the locals. But their colonial world was crumbling in the face of the Japanese offensive, exacerbated by the colonialists' unshakeable but misplaced 'born to rule' mentality. Wilfred was not yet anti-Empire. As an Australian working for a British newspaper owned by Britain's foremost colonial, Lord Beaverbrook, the Empire had indeed served Wilfred well. But he also felt that it was necessary for colonies on reaching maturity to determine their own paths, and not remain tied to the mother country's apron strings, particularly when the former's interests were no longer those of the latter. As he told a member of

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[30] Cable dated 2 April 1942; NAA981/1 BUR 15.
[31] Wilfred G Burchett, *op cit*, p 73, 75 & 76.
[32] Cable from Andrew Findlay, 'Machin' Burma, to the Services Public Relations Officer, 9 February 1942; NAA981/1, *op cit*.
[33] See the secret "cypher for despatch", 10 February 1942; *ibid*.
[34] *Ibid*.
[35] See the letter from R Macdougall, Burma Defence Secretariat, to J Galvin, Press Attache, British Embassy, Chungking, 13 February 1942; *ibid*.
[36] Letter from Chancery, Australian Legation, Chungking, to the Department of External affairs, Canberra, 10 April 1942; *ibid*.

Rangoon's colonial bureaucracy, who considered it better if "Old Dart" ran the war, "a lot of us in Australia think you've made a bloody mess of [it]." To the bureaucrat's apparent astonishment, Wilfred suggested it was in Australia's interest to have "a say" about the Pacific War rather than leave it to a British Government preoccupied with events in Europe and North Africa.[37] As with the recently elected Curtin Government, Wilfred was aware that the war was fraying Anglo-Australian ties, and that the interests of the latter would be better served by assuming a more independent defence strategy, though still under the Empire's umbrella.

Furthermore, the war had shown Wilfred that Britons and Australians were markedly different. Australians, like Americans, had retained attributes from their pioneering past, whilst the British had become ossified by class and bureaucracy. There was too much "'haw-hawing' and 'old boying'" amongst British decision-makers in Wilfred's opinion.[38] If the Japanese were to be defeated in Burma and elsewhere in Asia those on the fringes of Empire, pioneering types like Wilfred, had to reassert by merit rather than birth the Empire's right to rule. With this in mind, Wilfred set about establishing the superiority of his type.

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Clive North was one of *Bombs'* more endearing characters. A British frontier officer stationed amongst the hill-tribes of the northern Burmese mountains, North was overly ponderous, a persistent doubter, muddlingly bureaucratic, and a stickler for the road rather than a taker to the bush. Though amiable, he was afflicted with too many of the old country's ills for Wilfred's taste.

Wilfred first met North in late February 1942. With the collapse of Burma and the loss of the Road imminent, the British and Chinese were looking into alternative supply routes linking the Bengali hinterland - *via* Assam - with Yunnan. One mooted route was from the Assamese railhead of Ledo, over the Naga Hills and through the Hukawng Valley to the northern Burmese town of Myitkyina. A reconnaissance party had been arranged and Wilfred was invited to join. Within days of setting out from Bhamo in northern Burma, the party's military members were summoned to more pressing duties at the front. Wilfred, with North and two American oil prospectors, Sharberg and Calvert, pushed on. According to *Bombs*, the party was a clash of brash, 'New World' derring-doers with the officious circumspection of an 'Old Darter.' For Wilfred and the Americans, the hills were there to be tracked, tamed and exploited in true pioneering fashion. North was more cautious, presumably mindful of the hills' more menacing aspects, most notably their tribal inhabitants. But he was also a doubter by nature, which annoyed Wilfred and infuriated the gruffer Sharberg. After another of North's interminable "that's impossible chaps", Sharberg stormed that "a man gets nowhere" with such an attitude. The only test of right and wrong for the bluntly reductionist American was whether it worked or not, and Wilfred agreed.[39] Consequently, Sharberg and Wilfred flippantly dismissed North's

[37] See *Bombs Over Burma*, pp 146 & 149.
[38] *Ibid*, p 149.
[39] *Ibid*, p 124. See also Wilfred G Burchett," New supply Route for Chinese - Direct Road from India", the Melbourne *Argus*, 2 May 1942.

contribution to the party. North had sat with Kachin elders, spoke their language, respected their customs and won their support. Though Wilfed briefly acknowledged this, his major preoccupation was to blaze the dominant culture's trail into China, not commune with primitives. Other than in ways in which they assisted Wilfred's journey or embellished his story, the natives were to be kept at humorous distance. Wilfred poked fun at their music, and laughed as they crowded around the party's jeep, marvelling at the strange animal that "the white man had discovered and tamed."[40] In deriding them, he also tended to belittle North. Like the natives, North belonged to a declining culture. Wilfred and the Americans, in contrast, had the 'can-do' spirit to succeed, while Britons like North had failed.

Wilfred again met North in mid-April. On this occasion he was passing through the Hukwang Valley with the *Life* photographer, George Rodger. Wilfred and Rodger had covered the rearguard action by Chinese troops at Toungoo on the Sittaung River in southern Burma following the fall of Rangoon. After discussions with Chinese military authorities, the pair had been asked to explore the possibility of a supply route from the remote northern Burmese outpost of Shinbwiyang, over the Pangsao Pass to India. They set out on 11 April, and accidentally stumbled upon North at Yawbung on the remotest edge of the Hukwang Valley. As usual, North doubted Wilfred's wisdom. Nonetheless, he and his wife fed and accommodated the pair, supplemented their food stocks and organised Naga bearers. North also advised that Yawbang was the last of the Empire's outposts before India. In between, he warned, were head-hunting Nagas, who had acquired a reputation for ferocity amongst the whites.[41]

Of course, this only bolstered the reputation of the teller in Wilfred's tale. As he looked from North's hut to the hills to be traversed, they seemed "sombre and menacing, [and] . . . dense and angry", just the setting for an epic adventure. For over a week Wilfred and Rodger stumbled through "bamboo thickets, crawled along knife ridges" and "clambered up sandstone ledges." There were numerous leeches and mosquitoes, tiger tracks, the occasional stampeding elephant and, of course, the Nagas. One afternoon Wilfred pushed ahead of Rodger and the bearers, when he was suddenly confronted by a "really wild-looking group of Nagas." As he recalled in *Bombs*, he reached for his gun which, fortunately, he had forgotten. Once he realised they were not after his scalp, he established a cigarette trade and played tricks with mirrors to keep them amused.[42] In reality, Wilfred's reputed head-hunters were harmless. Indeed, the Nagas he met assisted rather than impeded the party. They directed it to food and water, carried its baggage, and ensured it kept to the track. Yet, Wilfred wrote of them as head-hunters. Fearless explorers required fearful surrounds to bolster their reputations.

On reaching the Pangsao Pass, Wilfred looked back over the "dark folded mountains" that he and Rodger had traversed. Before them was India, and to their rear Burma and the beginnings of the British retreat.[43] As he walked into Ledo, all marvelled at his and Rodger's nerve in coming over the

[40] *Op cit*, p 117.
[41] *Ibid*, pp 198-199.
[42] *Ibid*, p 206.
[43] *Ibid*.

hills without "an armed escort." When he collected his bags from the Naga bearers, he noticed that they wore "forlorn" expressions, presumably "thinking that they'd looked after us so well in the jungle, it [was] up to us to look after them in this strange new world." Their achievement had been the equal of Wilfred and Rodger's, but their needs were now secondary to those of the whites. Wilfred was off to tell the relevant authorities of the expedition, before flying back to Burma to get in at "the death." Presumably, the Nagas walked back over the hills to North, compounding their achievement. Such was the lot of those who, unlike Wilfred and Rodger, were not "the first white men to cross into India *via* the Pangsao Pass."[44] To tell the bearers' tale was to detract from Wilfred and Rodger's accomplishment.

Wilfred and North met again, shortly after the latter's retreat from North Burma. Wilfred had grown to respect North, because of his assistance and work amongst the Nagas, and now dismissively joked about his doubting. He had written an article on North's wife - "a slip" of a girl from Maccelsfield - and her support for her husband on the Empire's edge.[45] North, finally, had proven himself worthy of Wilfred's type. Like Wilfred, he was one of the few imbued with the spirit needed to defeat the Japanese.

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Bombs was published in 1943. It can readily be dismissed as another gung-ho war correspondent's yarn, too boastful to be entirely credible. But tucked within it were taunting, haunting memories of the Arakan front from the Christmas of 1942. Briefly, the mock-heroic voice and self-important bluster faltered, and a frightened, cowering Wilfred was glimpsed, pressed to the bottom of a samphan on the Mayu River. There, the hero of *Bombs* was conceived.

In the week before Christmas Erna and Rainer had joined Wilfred in Calcutta. The family had intended to celebrate the occasion together, but Allied troops were assembling on the Arakan front to push into Burma. Wilfred was determined to accompany them. By Christmas Day, he was on the front, where he was joined by Reuter's Gordon Waterfield. Early one morning they boarded a samphan and floated down the Mayu River towards the village of Buthidaung. With them were two samphan *wallahs* and several British officers. Late that afternoon, six Japanese Zero fighters strafed the samphan. Wilfred remembered being whacked "good and hard across the back", yelling ashamedly that he had been "hit", and he relived the fear of being "gradually shot to pieces" while pressed to the floor of the samphan. He recalled glancing upwards at the planes and the samphan wallah, still rowing. Amidst the bursts of fire, he rowed on, while Wilfred pressed to the floor. He looked up again and the wallah was gone, and a British officer impulsively jerked as another burst of fire sprayed the samphan. Wilfred pressed down, thankful that he did not have to watch, and his thoughts turned to the wallah.[46]

[44] *Ibid*, p 209 & 211-212.
[45] *Ibid*, p 231.
[46] *Ibid*, pp 240-245.

The group made it to shore. Wilfred had been peppered across his legs and back, and as night and a chill set in, his muscles stiffened and the pain increased. He shivered and groaned, and an old tribesman wrapped him a blanket. Help finally arrived, and he and the others were ferried to hospital, from where Wilfred cabled the *Express*, stating that he had survived "1500 rounds of [Japanese] ammunition."[47] But Wilfred's nerves were still "jumpy." While a crutched-up Waterfield stoically returned to the front within days, Wifred was transferred to the US Army Hospital in Delhi, where he spent the next three months recuperating and writing *Bombs*.[48] He wrote, convinced of his cowardice, and so reinvented himself as a hero. But he knew that the real hero of *Bombs* was the samphan wallah who "calmly went on rowing" while others fell around him.[49]

Rainer remembered that pieces of shrapnel would mysteriously lodge under the skin on his father's back and legs. Wilfred would ask him to pick them out.[50] Perhaps, every piece pricked his memory, as he once again saw the rowing wallah and himself huddled at the bottom of the boat. The memory was like the shrapnel, surfacing now and then to unfairly haunt and taunt him. Wilfred would never again cower under fire, but conducted himself with a grace befitting the wallah, mindful of the job at hand no matter what the danger. Another heroic Burchett was born at the bottom of the boat. For the time being, however, he lived only in the pages of *Bombs*.

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During his stay in hospital, Wilfred's *Express* colleague, Alaric Jacob, dropped in to bid farewell. He was off to the Russian front, but had just returned from seeing off "a terribly hush-hush show" bound for Burma. The military had sworn Jacob to secrecy, so he was unable to disclose details. But he had filed a story on the operation with the War Office in Delhi, and asked Wilfred to ensure that it reached the *Express*, if the mission was ever declassified.[51] Wilfred assured Jacob that he would. On 21 May the press ban was lifted, and Jacob's story promptly appeared on the paper's front page. Wilfred, however, suspected there was more to it, and travelled to the northern Burmese outpost of Sumprabum to interview those who had participated. Whilst there, his name caught the eye of the operation's commander, Orde Wingate.[52]

They first met in Wingate's room at Delhi's Maidan Hotel in mid-1943. Wilfred recalled that Wingate was sitting on his bed, stark naked, working away at his shoulders with a back-scratcher. In a corner sat Bernard Fergusson, one of Wingate's column commanders during the recent guerrilla foray behind the Japanese lines in northern Burma. As Wilfred mutely sat and listened, Wingate and Fergusson debated the merits of Emily Bronte's fiction. Wilfred later wrote; "I got no further that night, except for a grudging permission to see [Wingate] the following day."[53]

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[47] Peter Burchett, "Jap Planes Fired 1500 rounds at me", the London *Daily Express*, 4 January 1943
[48] *Op cit*, p 250.
[49] Peter Burchett, *op cit*.
[50] Conversation with Rainer Burchett, London, 30 June 1999.
[51] Wilfred Burchett, *Wingate Adventure*, p 45.
[52] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 87.
[53] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 46.

It was the first of dozen or so meetings between them. On most occasions Wilfred sat quietly, while Wingate paced the room, naked, his back scratcher at work, recounting his career and the recent Chindit operation. The latter had been a timely propaganda coup for the British Government, whose forces had been starved for success in Asia. The British press considered it the turning of the tide, dispelling once and for all the myths of the enemy's invincibility in jungle warfare. It was an overly optimistic assessment, based more on propaganda imperatives than actuality. As Wingate and his men straggled from Burma, the British counter-offensive in Arakan was being repulsed. Its failure was to be balanced, and hopefully overshadowed, by news of the Chindits' success. Obligingly, the London *Times* gloated that the Chindits had established "British mastery of the jungle", while the *Daily Mail* dubbed Wingate the "Clive of Burma."[54] On his return to London in early August 1943, Wingate was astonished to find that "the press rated him after Churchill and Montgomery . . . on the list of England's current war heroes."[55] By 9 August Wingate was in Quebec, attending the Quadrant Conference at Churchill's invitation. Churchill had told his Chiefs of Staff that Wingate was "a man of genius and audacity, . . . a figure quite above the ordinary level."[56] At Quebec Wingate convinced Roosevelt about the merits of guerrilla warfare, and so provided the wily Churchill with a cost-effective solution to the predicament of winning the war in Europe, whilst maintaining a commitment to the Asian theatre. A second Chindit operation could placate American concerns about Britain's resolve to re-take the Burma Road.

At the time of his first meeting with Burchett, Wingate was plotting the second campaign, a disturbing prospect for the so-called 'Blimps' of Delhi's conservatively minded military establishment, who were hostile to the brusque commander and his unorthodox methods. In the absence of their support, a sympathetic press was essential. Wingate was a cultivator of journalists, willing to part with a well-timed snippet of gossip to promote his own interests, or sink those of his enemies. He undoubtedly cultivated a knowing Wilfred, who was on the prowl for another marketable adventure yarn with a derring-do hero. There was no space in Wilfred's tale for Wingate's manic depression or his botched suicide attempt in a Cairo hotel during July 1942. Wilfred's Wingate had to be suitably fashioned, and the operation presented as an overwhelming success, a view that the commander was not entirely comfortable with. Indeed, Wingate was aghast at the operation's outcome, and expected to be court-martialled on his return. His subsequent report was damning, suggesting that "90% of the personnel were unfit" for guerilla warfare, and recommending that an unnamed column commander should never again be assigned combat responsibilities. But he did praise the biscuits, declaring: "I have never passed better stools." The operation was also a costly venture. Of the 3,000 men who set out, 2,182 returned, of whom only 600 regained full combat fitness.[57] When Wingate's report was published on 6 July 1943, it was hastily withdrawn to remove offensive remarks. This produced two reports instead of one: Wingate's uncensored version and the spruced-up, official cut. By this time,

[54] Cited by Trevor Royal in *Orde Wingate*, p 258.
[55] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 91.
[56] Cited by Trevor Royal, *op cit*, p 263.
[57] *Ibid*, pp 260-261.

Wingate and Wilfred were concocting another, more glowing account, which would fail to acknowledge either report, or Wingate's private misgivings. The war effort required morale-bolstering yarns, and so Wilfred scripted the operation to measure.

But the script was idiosyncratic. Though Wilfred's wounds had healed, the memories of the Mayu still taunted him, so his Wingate was cast as the hero Wilfred sought to be. Both men shared - in part - a past and causes. Each had defended Jewish rights: Wilfred in Germany and Wingate in Palestine, where he had established the 'Special Night Squads' to protect outlying Jewish settlements from dispossessed Arab marauders.[58] Also, neither curtsied to "rank [nor] privilege."[59] Wilfred told with relish of how Wingate's sudden appearance before the desk-bound 'Blimps' "jerked their nodding heads to attention with a start that nearly snapped their necks."[60] And both men were wanderers, venturing from well-worn tracks onto other sides of their respective frontiers. Whilst in Abyssinia, during the mid-1930s, Wilfred's Wingate had trudged "across waterless and trackless jungles, . . .[and] through unmapped areas", where no other white man had gone before.[61] He, like Wilfred, was the heroic explorer-type who had secured the Empire's greatness. The Burmese frontier was to be the type's most crucial test, as that greatness was now in retreat. The type was not found wanting, as Wingate and his men trekked over the Zibyu mountains, crossed the Chindwin, Irrawaddy and Shweli rivers, and trudged through unmapped jungles.

Most importantly, however, the Chindits reinforced the superiority of the British stock against a lesser, Asiatic pretender. Allied race war publicists - including Wilfred - had reduced the Pacific War to a battle between the white race's superior reason and goodness, and the frenzied evils of the inferior Japanese. It was a necessary simplification, emanating from ignorance, and exploiting populist racial stereotypes that most could get their minds around. Wilfred's Wingate and his Chindits were accordingly shaped to fit the mould, and at a most opportune time. Race war publicists had been tormented by the inconvenient fact that the so-called inferior Japanese were actually winning the war, particularly in the jungle. As Wilfred suggested, they were considered jungle supermen "who could march endless distances without food, appear in half a dozen places at once, . . .[and] guess every move of [their] opponent." But they were also a racially flawed, robotic bunch, with a "maniacal" streak, "lov[ing] nothing better than dying for [their] Emperor", usually "in frenzies of self-immolation." The British, Wilfred reassured, with their "superior brains, resources, technique, spiritual background, [and] outlook", would inevitably triumph. The Chindits heralded the beginning of the rout.[62]

According to Wilfred, they confronted few superhuman 'Japs' as they crept behind the latter's lines. Instead they found bungling, often cowardly, and always ratty Japanese rabbles who rushed into battle "howling and screaming", and "yelled even louder as they turned their tails and dashed for

[58] Wilfred Burchett, *Wingate Adventure*, p 51.
[59] *Ibid*, p 129.
[60] *Ibid*, p 128.
[61] *Ibid*, p 49.
[62] *Ibid*, pp 11 & 32.

cover."[63] They had "little inclination to fight", in contrast to Wingate's plucky boys.[64] If shot or bayoneted, the Japanese writhed about ingloriously until death, while Wingate's boys usually expired with the operation and their comrades' best interests at heart. On the occasions that the Japanese mounted an attack, "hara-kiri" in honour of Hirihito rode over tactical considerations. Blind devotion had stifled reason, so the Japanese were easily out-foxed by the "superior brains" of Wingate and his men. Wilfred defiantly declared that the Chindits had shown "we can fight in the jungle . . . [and] carry out infiltration on a scale that makes the Jap attempts seem amateurish."[65] But his voice was too heroic and tauntingly racist to be utterly convincing. It was a call to arms and not an assessment of Wingate's leadership, his prickly disposition, or the operation in general. In particular, it called on the British commoner to follow in Wingate's footsteps. The desk-bound 'Blimps' in Delhi and Rangoon had shown no stomach or aptitude for the fight, and so it was time for the commoner - like North - to step forward, seize the initiative, and win the war.

Bernard Fergusson was a quintessential member of the British military establishment and, prior to his recruitment by Wingate, a former Delhi 'Blimp.' Schooled at Eton and Sandhurst, the monocled Fergusson had served in the elite Black Watch regiment, and been *aide de camp* to Wavell. But Wilfred was unimpressed by Fergussson's credentials, preferring instead another column commander, 'Mad' Mike Calvert. Presumably, Wilfred became aware of Calvert in China, where the latter had commanded the innocuously named Bush Warfare School, a secret unit established to carry out demolition raids and ambushes behind the Japanese lines.[66] Calvert cut a daring figure in Wilfred's yarn, detonating bridges and railways, and continually out-witting the hapless Japanese. Wilfred's Fergusson, by comparison, was a buffoon-like amateur, with just enough nous to stay one step ahead of the enemy. He was accident-prone, tumbling into boats to the amusement of natives, and wandering into enemy camps to ask for directions. Fortunately, in the latter case, the Japanese were too stunned to act, enabling Fergusson to lob a grenade amongst them and duck for cover, without losing his monocle, which Wilfred claimed "winked in the moonlight."[67]

Fergusson's deputy was John Frazer, a former Rangoon businessman, schooled by life and not cloistered in privilege, and so unlikely to be ruffled when problems arose. According to Wilfred, when Fergusson's column reached the Chindwin, and was about to cross into British territory, Fergusson's "nerves" frayed, and so Frazer ushered the men to safety.[68] For the likes of Frazer - and Wilfred - the Chindwin crossing was a great equaliser. On the river, authority was earned by deeds, and not bequeathed by the privileges of birth or a public school education. On Wilfred's Chindwin, the commoner was certainly the equal of his supposed master, if not better.

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[63] *Ibid*, p 155.
[64] *Ibid*, p 138.
[65] *Ibid*, p 187.
[66] See Christopher Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp 360-361.
[67] *Op cit*, p 111.
[68] *Ibid*, p 148.

But no man rivalled Wingate. Before his death in a plane crash on 23 March 1944, he had given Wilfred a copy of Elizabeth Gaskell's novel, *Wives and Daughters*. The book was one of Wingate's most treasured possessions, and he carried it into battle.[69] Wilfred also treasured the book, and the memory of its owner. He was a cut above others; a Renaissance man who could have been "a scholar, a philosopher, an artist, [and even] a religious recluse."[70] But the age required soldiers and Wingate, convinced that another war was inevitable, curbed his ambitions in other fields to serve his country. On his death, Wilfred lamented that "of all the figures in British public life Wingate was one England and the world could least afford to lose."[71]

Nonetheless, Wilfred's Wingate was a shadow of his creator. As Wilfred's Wingate approached the Chindwin, he stood before a panorama of "rolling purple folds of hills, boundless as the sea, stretch[ing] to every side." Behind him were the Japanese, and before him "India." Wilfred, too had stood in a similar, if not the same spot, "surveying boundless . . . mountains and valleys."[72] Before him also lay India. The Japanese were still pushing up the Burma Road. The hero had followed in the author's footsteps, sharing a perch on which each was one with the other. Momentarily, the author became the hero of his own story, and perhaps began to summon the courage to follow in Wingate's footsteps.

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Wilfred again pondered the Burma Road during late 1943. Time had blurred some memories, and sharpened others. Maybe it was his debt to the wallah, but this road and its by-ways were cast in his image. Graft and corruption still travelled the road, but it was now etched from the "patient honesty and sacrifice" of its peasant-builders. Wilfred remembered their "pinched" faces, and admired their hardiness as they lugged bamboo baskets filled with mortar, or "pecked away at a solid rock wall till there was room to stand." He recalled an old man with "a goitre as large as a football . . . wielding a small hammer which seemed as heavy as his frail body." By his side was a woman with small children around her, all hammering at rocks, while "sweat poured down [their] brown faces." As Wilfred passed they did not look up to acknowledge him, so intent were they on their work. In the spirit of the wallah, they kept dutifully hammering. Their selflessness, and not the antics of the gun-touting truck-drivers, kept China in the war. This was the peasants' road, and the beginning of Wilfred's journey into his 'real China.'[73]

On 15 June 1942 Wilfred had flown from Chungking to Kwelian. He was bound for the eastern provinces of Kiangsi and Chekiang, to report on the recent Japanese offensive in response to the Doolittle air raids on Tokyo. In Kwelian, he was introduced to Yung Kung, the literary editor of the Hong Kong based, though now exiled, *Ta Kung Pao*. After discussions with Yung's editor,

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[69] Conversation with Rainer Burchett, 30 June 1999, London.
[70] *Op cit*, p 46.
[71] Wilfred Burchett, *Democracy with a Tommy-Gun*, p 144.
[72] *Ibid*, p 163 & *Bombs Over Burma*, p 208.
[73] *Wilfred* Burchett, *Democracy With a Tommy-Gun*, pp 11-14.

arrangements were made for her to accompany Wilfred on his travels. Professionally, she was Wilfred's senior, but he was loathed to acknowledge it. She was simply his "interpreter", there to serve his needs and accentuate his self-importance.[74]

Within days they were on the Kiangsi front, amongst ruined roads and bridges, and the grisly reminders of war. They were told of slaughters and rapes by Japanese troops, heard whispers of praise for the Red Army, and grumbles about the Government's forced requisitioning of rice, which was driving the peasantry from the land. They saw abandoned farms, and learned of peasant revolts against corrupt tax collectors, siphoning off more than the Government's entitlement. Wilfred noted that the people "were prepared to suffer and starve if they felt that their sacrifices were equal and for good cause." All they expected was "some honesty and justice in return."[75] But the *Kuomintang* was too morally bereft. In Kienyang, Wilfred gleaned from refugees that *Kuomintang* troops had surrendered Chekiang without a fight. He also heard of officers loading trucks with personal belongings, instead of the men and equipment needed to continue the war. In Kienyang's shops he saw shelves stocked with Japanese goods. Shopkeepers claimed it was old stock, but local students confided that *Kuomintang* soldiers frequently traded with the enemy.[76] Wilfred began to see the seedier side of the *Kuomintang*, and the glimmerings of another China.

As he left Nancheng he noticed a sign over the city's eastern gate which told of a peoples' China. Defiantly, it declared: "Our homes you can break and burn, but our spirit is stronger than the tigers." As he passed ruined crops, smashed implements and burnt villages, he began to marvel at the people's "capacity for such enduring suffering." On the riverfront at Kienyang, he and Yung met an old couple whilst sheltering under a bridge during an air raid. The couple were "poverty-stricken, humble boat people", cooking fish while the raid passed. They invited Wilfred and Yung to share their catch. When Wilfred offered to pay for his share, the couple declined, graciously explaining: "If a foreigner comes to us and shares our troubles, the least we can do is share our rice with him." Wilfred remembered the couple's selflessness, which had restored his "faith in the goodness, honesty and dignity of China."[77] As he ventured on, he began to see the same spirit in Yung's preparedness to not only "go out and suffer with her people", but also "to understand and reveal the cause of their sufferings."[78] Removed, momentarily, from the pettiness of professional jealousies, he envisaged her in the mould of the wallah and the hammerers of the road.

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Wilfred recalled that Chungking was decked-out on his return in October. Roosevelt's roving envoy, Wendell Wilkie, was in town, and about to inspect the Yellow River front, so Wilfred tagged along. The front turned out to be "a stage set . . . produced for visiting foreigners." Shots were rarely

[74] *Ibid*, p 47.
[75] *Ibid*, p 57.
[76] *Ibid*, pp 70-71.
[77] *Ibid*, pp 73-74.
[78] *Ibid*, p 88.

fired across it. As an officer explained, such acts "would do neither of us any good." But on the front were the *Kuomintang's* "crack" troops. Unlike the rag-tag bands that Wilfred had seen in the south, these were "well-fed looking chaps", splendidly attired in uniforms of "excellent quality." As they goose-stepped passed Wilkie, Wilfred was reminded of Chiang's German-trained clique of generals, who had privately supported the Axis powers, and he wondered whether their real enemy were the Japanese or Mao's Red Army.

He returned on a train liberally stocked with German beer and wine, and lashings of food. The Generalissimo's German-trained son, Chiang Wei-kuo had arranged the fare. He boasted that the liquor had been seized in a border raid, but Wilfred had heard whispers that it was bought off the enemy. The Catholic Bishop of Chungking, Paul Yupin, was also on the train. As passengers feasted, he told of famine in Honan. Peasants were fleeing the province, eating bark and grass as they went. Some were even bartering their children for food. As Yupin spoke, Wilfred looked out on a fertile China, and began to question the wisdom of the *Kuomintang's* requisitioning of rice. He might have entertained the suspicion that the *Kuomintang's* other enemy was the Chinese peasantry.[79]

Back in Chungking, Hollington Tong had arranged for Wilfred to interview the Generalissimo. The prospect had been floated prior to Wilfred's departure for Burma, and had finally come to fruition.[80] According to Wilfred, *Time's* Theodore White had been invited too. He and Forman had just completed a two-week horseback journey through Honan.[81] On his return, White was enraged at the "the bland equanimity of the capital" towards the suffering in the province.[82] Doubtless, he was keen to pursue the matter with the Generalissimo. But after a few agreeable "ho, ho, ho's" from the latter, White and Wilfred were dismissed.[83] To compensate, Tong arranged for Wilfred to interview Madame Chiang Kai-shek. Wilfred later wrote: "I had the absurd feeling I was expected to drop on one knee and kiss her skirt hem."[84] Their China was no longer his. It was too self-indulgent and corrupt, unlike the selfless China of his road and its by-ways. At the end of his road was no longer the *Kuomintang's* battered Chungking, but the people's China. Wilfred had begun another journey, across the ideological divide.

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[79] *Ibid*, p 111-112.
[80] *Ibid*, p 45.
[81] Theodore White & Annalee Jacoby, *Thunder Out of China*, pp 166-168.
[82] *Ibid*, p 177.
[83] Wilfred G Burchett, *op cit*, pp 115-116.
[84] *Ibid*, p 117.

Chapter 4 Falling Out

On New Year's 1943, Wilfred, under instructions from the *Express'* foreign editor, Charles Foley, sailed south from Bombay to Australia. Foley had asked Wilfred to contact Henry Keys, a fellow Australian and another of the *Express'* stable of 'colonial' journalists. Keys had been covering the Pacific War, but the theatre was now too scattered for one correspondent. He and Wilfred were to divide it between them.[1]

On board, Wilfred began to rummage through his "jumbled ideas."[2] He was glad to be out India, having found it alien and depressing after China. He remembered flying towards the Himalayan 'Hump' from Chungking, and looking over the "neat" clipped terraces of the Chinese countryside. It was ordered and productive, identifiable and harnessed, and slotting favourably into his materialistic notion of progress. Over the 'Hump', however, India sprawled, "careless and unchecked", and unproductive. It was backward, poor and dirty. Its people were illiterate and ignorant, fatalistically accepting their conditions and "lowly status of life." And it was cursed with racial, communal and sectarian strife. Religious zealots, such as the Hindu, Gandhi, and the Muslim League's Jinnah, fostered disharmony and undermined the war effort with their respective campaigns for independence, while the liberals and intellectuals of the non-sectarian Indian Congress ignored the "ordinary problems of the masses." Wilfred remembered that there was "much to depress" and few elixirs. Soviet-styled agricultural and industrial revolutions were required "to sweep away the cobwebs of ignorance and superstition which dominate[d] every phase of Indian life." Until then, India would remain backward, bickering, and prone to fragmentation, trapped in time and enchained by zealotry.[3]

But the Indians were not entirely to blame. As in Burma, British colonialism had failed them, and nowhere was it more apparent than in Calcutta. It was the 'Paris of the East', and until 1911 the capital of imperial India. In 1943, monuments to the city's grander days were all too apparent, as was famine. Poor harvests, hoarding and inflation, and insensitive responses from the British and Bengali governments had brought it on. Local communists put the death toll at 12 million, but the official inquiry sliced it to 1.5 million. Wilfred was unsure of the toll, but he remembered refugees flooding into the city, and the "peculiar distinctive sourish smell." It was "the stench" off the dead. Only when "the stench" wafted to the Viceroy's palace did its incumbent, Lord Linlithgow, chose to act.[4] But, according to Wilfred, it was already too late. For far too long the British had remained walled-up in their clubs, complaining about shortages of whisky and gin, oblivious to the famine and war on their doorsteps. To Wilfred, the clubs housed reminders of Rangoon and Singapore before their falls. In the clubs' bars and dining-rooms gathered the Raj's "ostriches with [their] heads in the sand and nether parts well exposed." They, with the *Kuomintang*, were "decaying" historical forces. As he steamed

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[1] Wilfred Burchett, *Democracy with a Tommy-Gun*, pp 183
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.* pp 121, 166, 172 & 181-182.
[4] *Ibid.* pp 119 & 146-148.

towards Australia, he was relieved to be rid of them and India, and eager to get to the politically uncomplicated Pacific War.[5]

Australia, he noted, "was like coming from darkness into light", and was a far cry from the insular country he had left in 1941. Curtin's Labor Party was in power and all seemed united in defence of country and Empire. But Asia had broadened Wilfred. Though he was proud of his country's contribution to the Allied effort, he was developing an outsider's eye. Before he left Calcutta, his fellow-countrymen, Richard Casey, had been appointed Governor of Bengal amidst protests about the White Australia Policy. Wilfred had been a supporter of the policy, but now considered it a "dangerously-poised chip on [Australia's] shoulder", as it "insult[ed] more than half the world's population" through its "implicit acceptance" of white supremacy. It discriminated against more palatable and deserving Asians; businessmen, tourists and students, who "should be able to visit . . . on the same basis as nationals of other countries." Instead, they were lumped alongside coolies and "primitive" Kanakas, and indiscriminately barred because of their race.[6]

There was a heartfelt sting in the tail of Wilfred's remarks. Ma Than E was a young, strikingly beautiful, and well-educated Burmese woman. Shortly before the fall of Rangoon, she had fled to Calcutta and found employment in the Propaganda Unit of All-India Radio. She might have been the Anglo-Burmese woman of "good family" and education, with whom Wilfred dined - to the outrage of his fellow white diners - at Calcutta's exclusive Grand Hotel before his departure.[7] In early 1944, Wilfred attempted to breach another racial barrier by bringing her to Australia. The noted Canberra journalist, Don Whitington, had made inquiries on Wilfred's behalf, but ran into unspecified "hurdles." Winston, who was now the personal secretary to the Labor Minister for Air, A G Drakeford, had also brought the matter to the attention of Curtin's Press Secretary, D K Rodgers.[8] Rodgers recommended that Wilfred should approach Information, accentuating that Ma Than E's presence in Australia was crucial to his work.[9]

On 3 February, Wilfred wrote to the department, explaining that Ma Tan E had been his "lady secretary", and "helped [him] greatly . . . in preparing two books on Burma." A third was currently in progress, "a more serious study" of the country's "social and religious customs", and its reaction to the Japanese occupation. Because of Ma Than E's "knowledge of Burmese life", and her "invaluable" preparatory work, her presence in Australia was essential for the book's completion. Wilfred assured that he would assume financial responsibility for her travel and stay. As he was due to depart for San Francisco and the Pacific theatre, he hurriedly arranged for Winston to accommodate her, and provided

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[5] Wilfred Burchett, *ibid*, pp 186, 182-183; & *Bombs Over Burma*, p 216
[6] *Ibid*, pp 194, 192 & 188.
[7] Wilfred Burchett, *Bombs Over Burma*, pp 216-218.
[8] Letter from Don Whitington to Wilfred Burchett, 2 February 1944; NAA1066/4 P1 15/186.
[9] Letter from D K Rodgers, Press Secretary to the Prime Minister, to Wilfred Burchett, 4 February 1944; *ibid*.

funds to cover her expenses.[10] He departed convinced his request would be granted. But nothing came of it.

Nothing also came of the book on Burma. The following December he was in San Francisco, marvelling at its beauty which, he added, had been greatly enhanced by Ma Than E's unexpected appearance. She was "working for the [US] Office of War Information", and America's gain was Australia and Wilfred's loss.[11] It would be 18 years until they met again, yet she would still stir intimate feelings within him.

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When Wilfred left Brisbane for San Francisco in mid-February, he had seemingly recovered his self-assurance and perhaps even acquired a smug swagger. While in Australia, he had been feted as an author and war correspondent of international note. Newspapers and the ABC had sought his opinion, and his books were supposedly well positioned in all good bookshops - or so he thought. In Sydney, Wilfred was horrified to discover that the recently released *Wingate Adventure* was not in Angus & Robertson's window or on the shop's shelves, but stored "under the counter." The book was also not apparent in Brisbane's bookstores.[12] But these were minor irritations, rectified by a stern word to Cheshires and salved by favourable reviews. Shortly after his March arrival in San Francisco, Wilfred was doubtlessly elated to read that the Melbourne *Argus* had tagged *Bombs* "one of the most alive and informative books of the war."[13] Furthermore, *Wingate Adventure* was selling solidly, no doubt bolstered by news of Wingate's recent death. Within months, the *Toronto Star* had commenced publishing Wilfred's pieces, along with the *Chicago Daily News*.[14] In his absence, he had asked George to ensure that Cheshires adequately represented his interests. Wilfred wanted his books prominently placed in bookshops, particularly in Brisbane, where the influx of troops would provide "a specially good market."[15]

He seemed again on the brink of a brilliant career, and was proud to be associated with "the war effort of the most highly industrialised country in the world."[16] Journalists and military personnel were returning to San Francisco from the campaign that had secured the Marshall, Truk and Marianas islands, and told of their amazement at the "poor showing" of the Japanese and the "lightness of the[ir] defences." Wilfred cautioned George that this "doesn't mean the Japs won't fight like hell when they decide to make a stand." There was "no easy optimism" about the job ahead.[17]

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[10] Letter from Wilfred to his "Mother and Father", Brisbane, 10 February 1944, BP, SLV.
[11] Letter from Wilfred to his "Mother and Father", San Francisco, 8 December 1944; *ibid.*
[12] Letter from Wilfred to his "Mother and Father", San Francisco, 14 October 1944; *ibid.*
[13] "Burchett Over Burma", the Melbourne *Argus Weekend Supplement*, 14 April 1944.
[14] Letter from Wilfred to his "Mother and Father", 12 August 1944; BP, SLV.
[15] Letter from Wilfred to his "Mother and Father", San Francisco, 14 October 1944.
[16] Wilfred Burchett, *Democracy With a Tommy-Gun*, p 198.
[17] Letter from Wilfred to his "Mother and Father", San Francisco, 6 March 1944; BP SLV.

By July he was off the coast of Guam. On "battle eve" he wrote to George, telling of the prolonged bombardment of Japanese positions by American ships and planes, and of his "hope [that] the fighting won't be as tough as it was on Saipan." As he looked around him, he saw "boys . . . cleaning and oiling their guns, . . . writing letters, [and] clutching over their water bottles and haversack contents." Together, they had just eaten "the 'condemned man's banquet.'" Though young, they seemed strangely accepting of their fates, given the loss of their "comrades" on Saipan. But they, like Wilfred, did not dwell on the past. They, he later noted, were "hard physically and in spirit, . . . a crack unit from an elite organisation." He was to follow them ashore with Bill McGaffin of the *Chicago Daily News* and John Beaufort of the *Christian Science Monitor*.[18]

The landing would be the first substantial test of his mettle since Arakan, and he subsequently wrote of it with the celebratory zest of a survivor whose resolve had not buckled under fire. On the contrary, Wilfred marvelled at the shelling, and relished the spectacle of hell-diving fighters and their "breath-taking plunges", as they pounded the Japanese-held hinterland and beyond. The beachhead, he dismissively recounted, was like "every other I have been on", a mixture of "seeming casualness" and "ear-splitting noise." Soldiers stood about, while orders were issued "unhurriedly", despite "bullets . . . zinging past" or a bothersome explosion from a nearby shell. Most soldiers "carr[ied] on as if they were on manoeuvre, instead of in the middle of sudden death." But "there [were] no safe spots." That night Wilfred and his colleagues pressed to the sides of their foxhole as "fireworks" exploded overhead. The next morning Wilfred was advised that the Japanese had broken through the American line and pushed to within earshot of his hole before being repulsed.[19] In the days that followed, Wilfred survived "an ambush" and other "hair-raising experiences", and watched American marines bulldoze, blast and prod the Japanese from their burrows.[20] By the time he left Guam, Wilfred had answered the taunts of his cursed wallah.

By mid-September Wilfred was on the American carrier, *Lexington*, under the command of Vice-Admiral Marc Mitscher. Small, slight and unassuming, Mitscher was Wilfred's "little man in the swivel chair", controlling a powerful array of weaponry from under his "Khaki baseball cap."[21] One evening, Wilfred watched Japanese planes dive at the *Lexington*. Most were caught in the "rapid-fire" of the carrier's anti-aircraft guns. Soon the surrounding waters were "spouting flames and smoke from burning planes", and as darkness fell, Wilfred became entranced by "a spectacle that took on the dramatic brilliance of pyrotechnics at a world exhibition." Tracers shot skywards, and "now and again a plane [would burst] in crimson balls of fire."[22] His warscape was scarcely peopled and almost victimless. Instead, it glowed with the wonders of American technology.

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[18] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, pp 202-203; & the letter from Wilfred to his "Mother and Father", CINPAC, 19 July 1944; BP, SLV.
[19] Wilfrid Burchett, *Democracy With a Tommy-Gun*, pp 204 & 207-211.
[20] Letter from Wilfred to his "Mother and Father", 12 August 1944, BP, SLV; & *ibid*, p 211.
[21] Wilfred Burchett, "The Little Man in the Swivel Chair", the London *Daily Express*, 26 October 1944.
[22] Wilfred Burchett, *Democracy with a Tommy-Gun*, p 225.

By October, Wilfred was steaming towards the Philippines' San Bernardino Straits on the *Lexington's* sister-carrier, *Hancock*. Rumours had reached the US fleet that a Japanese force had moved northwards from Singapore and was off the Filipino coast. Wilfred watched the "'Hell-divers'" take-off one morning in "a dramatic and colourful performance", and return that afternoon. They had engaged the Japanese off Samar Island. Wilfred was told that as the planes dipped their noses, "the Jap force went into a crazy dance of death." A pilot related his "fun [at] watching the tracers bouncing like golf balls across the decks" of the Japanese ships. Uncritically, Wilfred noted his remarks. War was fun when the victims were supposed savages and technology kept them safely from view.[23]

By mid-November, he was on Saipan, watching the Super Fortresses and B-29s arriving for the imminent invasion of Japan. Wilfred was particularly taken by the Fortress, crowning it "the most beautiful aircraft yet produced." It was pinnacle of American 'know-how'; "smoothly tapered like an artist's brush handle", and riding "like a feathered dart." On 24 November Wilfred watched the Fortresses leave for Yokosuka and Yokohama. On their return, he was told by Brigadier-General Emmett O'Donnell that "it was one of the easiest missions [he had] been on." Both cities had been extensively bombed, and Wilfred rejoiced that now "no part of the Jap Empire [was] out of reach of United States bombers."[24]

By February 1945 Wilfed was again floating off Guam. The American playwright and Special Assistant to the Secretary of the US Navy, Robert Sherwood, had recently joined the fleet, and he and Wilfred quickly became acquainted. As "an intimate" of Roosevelt, Sherwood was "wonderfully informative in the stuff behind the scenes."[25] As an acclaimed playwright, he was also an invaluable contact for an ambitious writer seeking to crack the American market. Wilfred was well aware of the difficulties. During the previous August, he had tried, without luck, to interest American publishers in *Wingate Adventure*.[26] He had written a substantial slice of another book on his wartime thoughts and adventures, which he showed Sherwood who, apparently, enthused that it was worthy of "wide publication." He offered to recommend the work to his American publisher, Viking.[27]

In the meantime, US carriers had massed 300 miles off the Japanese coast, and Super Fortresses had commenced incendiary bombings of Japanese cities. In mid-February Tokyo and Yokohama had been torched in the first of the raids. Wilfred marvelled at their scale, still too blinkered by the pyrotechnics to notice the victims. He still considered the Japanese inferior, essentially savage, and best kept at a safe distance by American technology. As he told George, it saved "poking" them from caves.[28]

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[23] *Ibid*, pp 219 & 233
[24] *Ibid*, p 238; & Wilfred Burchett, "Japs Taken by Surprise", the London *Daily Express*, 25 November 1944.
[25] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 26 February 1945; BP, SLV.
[26] Letter from Wilfred to his "Mother & Father", 12 August 1944; *ibid*.
[27] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 26 February 1945, *ibid*.
[28] Wilfred Burchett, *Democracy with a Tommy-Gun*, pp 242-243 & 210; & the letter from Wilfred to "Mother & Father", 2 March 1945; BP SLV.

Indeed, that image had become etched in Wilfred's mind. Whilst on Guam's Orote Peninsula, Wilfred had accompanied American troops, prising the Japanese from caves. It was a particularly gruesome job. If resistance was met, the Americans either sealed the cave, suffocating its inhabitants, or employed a flame-thrower to incinerate them. Wilfred remembered "the blood-chilling yell" that followed the flame-thrower's use, and the "charred" remains of the Japanese soldiers pulled from the caves. He also remembered a medical officer who "turned aside to be sick." As Wilfred noted the officer's disgust, perhaps he too momentarily felt for the victims. For an instance, they were no longer Japanese, but human. It heralded the commencement of Wilfred's falling-out with the Americans' technological warfare.[29]

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Sato Sen was one of Wilfred's few fictional creations. He was a Japanese tradesman and model "slave-state" citizen. "[H]ard working [and] uncomplaining", Sen had had "a mystical faith in . . . the Emperor." But Sen had since been wounded, his housed bombed and his son killed hurtling his plane into an enemy carrier in Hirihito's name. Yet, despite these woes, Sen remained inscrutable to Wilfred who pondered if the 'Jap's' faith in the Emperor, and the war in general, had been rattled. With these posers in mind, Wilfred embarked on a jour ; into Japan's heart that irrevocably altered his life. By its end, the savages who had seized Burma would become the victims of Hiroshima.[30]

On 6 August Wilfred was on Okinawa, queuing for his "midday chow" when he heard of Hiroshima's bombing. Initially, not much attention was paid to the announcement, but as it was repeated, its significance grew. That night Wilfred noticed that the trepidation of American troops about the seemingly unavoidable invasion of Japan had given way to murmurs of peace. But the bombing had also prodded Wilfred's curiosity about the latest American technology, atomic warfare. In the following days he viewed photographs of the devastated city, and was horrified to discover that the bomb had "wiped out an area equivalent to that cleared by 500 Super Fortresses in normal incendiary raids." With that disturbing revelation, the fun and spectacle went from Wilfred's war. He later remarked, "even the layman could see that something new and terrible had been accomplished."

On 15 August Japan accepted the Allies' surrender terms, after another atomic attack on Nagasaki, and two weeks later American and British ships entered Tokyo Bay. The US Fourth Marine Regiment had been ordered to go ashore at Yokosuka, to commence the Allied occupation, and Wilfred and a handful of his colleagues accompanied it. As the ships cruised up the bay, Wilfred noted the intermittent white flags dotting the shoreline, signifying gun emplacements. He also saw "adults . . . bathing, [and] children paddling and splashing about as if life followed its normal course for them and always would." He was entering Sen's world, glimpsing the Japanese not as warlike monsters, but as people living normal lives. Early on the morning of 30 August, the marines stepped ashore and spread

[29] Wilfred Burchett, *Democracy With a Tommy-Gun*, p 215.

throughout Yokosuka's empty streets. But by midday, life in the city had returned to normal, and Wilfred and Bill McGaffin set off to explore Sen's world.[31]

The US military had not yet imposed restrictions on journalists' movements, so Wilfred and McGaffin could move about freely, and quickly caught a train to Tokyo. It was crammed, but "people cleared a space", staring at the pair with "a mixture of fear and curiosity, but . . . no resentment." *En route*, Wilfred saw "devastation . . . without parallel." Once populous "residential districts had disappeared without a trace", their inhabitants now crowded into corrugated iron shacks. The Japanese passengers, however, "gazed stolidly" ahead. Perhaps Wilfred was touched by their stoicism. It was a quality he admired. In Tokyo the pair booked into the *Dai Ichi* Hotel, and were warned by a nervous manager about the city's "hotheads." But Wilfred and McGaffin wandered about unmolested. Wilfred noted it was the people who had suffered most. He was told that during an air attack on 10 March, 100,000 of them had been incinerated in two hours.[32]

By early September, correspondents had gathered in Yokohama to cover the Japanese surrender on board the *USS Missouri*. Wilfred, however, had other plans. In collusion with his *Express* colleague, Henry Keys, he was plotting a trip to Hiroshima. Trains still ventured there from Tokyo, and Wilfred had arranged, through the local *Domei* news agency, for cable facilities to transmit his story from Hiroshima to Keys in Tokyo. On the morning of the 2 September, while his colleagues were preparing to depart for the *Missouri*, Wilfred feigned illness. He then made his way to Tokyo Station and took the train to Hiroshima. On board were demobilised officers, surly at the defeat, "muttering and grumbling and fingering . . . swords and hilts." An American priest, on his way to make a broadcast to the occupiers on their behaviour in Japan, warned Wilfred that the officers were "not a bit pleased to see [him]." But in the corridors stood rank-and-file soldiers, "sullen" but curious. Wilfred handed them food and cigarettes, and "by the end of six hours . . . they were all smiles."[33] He was now in Sen's world, and stripped of his race-war blinkers, beginning to see 'the Japs' as people. Within days they were victims.

In the early hours of 3 September, Wilfred alighted in Hiroshima, and was promptly grabbed by two uniformed guards and imprisoned. The local *Domei* representative, Nakamura, subsequently secured Wilfred's release, and as they travelled through the city's streets he told his story. Nakamura lived four miles from the city's centre. On the morning of the attack he remembered the warning siren, and two planes passing overhead. As he was about to leave for work, one plane came back, and there was "a blinding light, [and] . . . a scorching heat on [his] face." As he looked up he saw "a tremendous black pillar of smoke", and then he realised that "Hiroshima had disappeared." As they travelled on, Wilfred noted that the city was like "a death stricken planet", with "mists . . . issu[ing] forth from

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[30] Wilfred Burchett, "Land of No Escape: A Pen Picture of an Ordinary Japanese Artisan and his Country Feels the Increasing Weight of Allied Attacks", the Melbourne *Argus*, 4 August 1945.
[31] Wilfred Burchett, *Democracy with a Tommy-Gun*, pp 262-265; & *Shadows of Hiroshima*, p 28.
[32] Wilfred Burchett, *Democracy with a Tommy-Gun*, pp 265-267.
[33] *Ibid*, pp 267-268; & *Shadows of Hiroshima*, pp 28-30.

fissures in the soil", and a "dank, acrid, sulphurous smell." There were no bomb-craters, or large chunks of rubble - the usual residue of bombing. Hiroshima's buildings had been reduced to dust. As they crossed the river, Wilfred saw scores of dead fish, floating belly-up for no apparent reason.[34] At the Communications Hospital he met Dr Katsube and saw, lying on dirty mats, "scores of people in various stages of dying from atomic radiation." All were emaciated and horridly odorous. Some had burns, while others were just marked. Some were bleeding from their eyes and gums, and had lost their hair, but all, Katsube assured, would eventually die. He was at a loss on how to treat them. He knew that a mysterious ailment was killing their blood cells, but could not arrest the process. He urged Wilfred to report on what he had seen, and to tell "your people to send specialists who know about this sickness with the necessary medicines." Wilfred was then ushered to the door. He noticed that the sick and their families "looked at [him] with a burning hatred that cut into [him] like knife."[35] Suddenly, he was the savage and they were the victims, and so he began to write their story.

He tapped it out while sitting on "a rare block of concrete", with his typewriter resting on his knees. It was apocalyptic; a "warning to the world", telling of a bombed city unlike any other, which had been "squashed out of existence." It was a story that he attempted to tell "dispassionately", but it was too keenly felt for that. The city's damage was "frightening and terrible", and its inhabitants were "still dying mysteriously and horribly . . . from an unknown something which I can only describe as the atomic plague."[36] When the story reached the *Express* - *via* Nakamura and Keys - the editor, Arthur Christiansen, thought Wilfred had been overly affected by the "horror" of it all.[37] Nonetheless, Christiansen recognised the story's power, and let it run on the front page, with a few additions from the *Express'* science writer, Chapman Pincher. Towards the end of his life, Wilfred praised Christiansen for retaining the "essential point I wanted to make", but he lambasted Pincher, suggesting he "clearly wanted to show his erudition on atomic matters, but it was highly unethical to do this under my name." By that time, however, Pincher and Burchett were politically at odds, the former accusing the latter of being a Soviet agent and traitor. Perhaps their smaller, private cold war - like the larger, public one - flared at Hiroshima.[38]

Of course, Wilfred's was not the side of the story that American authorities wanted told. To have the Japanese suddenly transformed from villains to victims placed the onus of guilt on the Americans. Blame for the bomb had to remain with the Japanese, so the Americans emphasised that it was dropped to end the war and avoid a costly invasion of Japan. The ascendancy that the bomb gave the Americans over the Soviets in the post-war carve-up of Europe was not mentioned, along with the

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[34] *Ibid*, pp 36-37; & *Democracy with a Tommy-Gun*, pp 274-275.
[35] *Ibid*, p 276; *Shadows of Hiroshima*, pp 38-39; *At the Barricades*, pp 111-113.
[36] Wilfred Burchett, "The Atomic Plague: I Write This as a Warning to the World", the London *Daily Express*, 6 September 1945. See also *At the Barricades*, pp 113 & 114; & *Shadows of Hiroshima*, p 34.
[37] Arthur Christiansen, *Headlines All My Life*, p 49. See also *At the Barricades*, p 114.
[38] Wilfred Burchett, *Shadows of Hiroshima*, p 37.

lingering affects of radiation.[39] Long before Wilfred reached Hiroshima, the Americans had manufactured the official side of the story.

William L Laurence wrote for the *New York Times* on science matters. In the March prior to the bombings, Laurence had been recruited by the officer-in-charge of the Manhattan Project, General Leslie R Groves, to concoct the official line. Groves was concerned that the bombings would be scrutinised by "crackpots, columnists, commentators, political aspirants, would-be authors and world savers", and that their remarks might be "ruinous." He wanted Laurence "to control the situation by the issuance of carefully written press releases." In the months prior to the bombing, Laurence scripted announcements about yet-to-be-staged atomic happenings. Laurence was later awarded the Pultizer Prize and a War Department commendation for his efforts.[40]

But he was not amongst the group of journalists that Wilfred stumbled across while walking Hiroshima's streets. They were there at the behest of Groves to peddle the official line. According to Wilfred, the group was "chagrined" to find him already there, spoiling their "officially guaranteed 'scoop.'" He advised them that the "real story [was] in the hospital." However, he later remarked, they showed a "patent disinterest . . . in the fate of the Bomb's victims", and were carefully ushered by their accompanying officers through the ruins and away from the Japanese side of the story.[41]

Wilfred returned to Tokyo on 7 September, and was quickly informed that the American military authorities were about to conduct a press conference to refute his story. As Wilfred later recalled, he arrived at the conference as the deputy head of the Manhattan Project, Brigadier-General Thomas Farrell, was denying the presence of radiation at Hiroshima. Wilfred asked Farrell if he had visited the city, and seen the dead fish in the river or met with Japanese doctors. Farrell dismissively responded that Wilfred had "fallen victim to Japanese propaganda." In the ensuing days, Groves and Farrell warned of Japanese stories intended to covey "sympathy" for the so-called victims of the blasts.[42] Meanwhile, Wilfred had been whisked off to a US Army Hospital, where it was discovered that he had a low white blood-cell count. Doctors blamed a knee infection. Years later Wilfred learned his condition was characteristic of exposure to excessive radiation. When he left hospital, his camera was missing, containing photographs of Hiroshima, and his press accreditation had been withdrawn on the order of the Allied Occupation's commander, General Douglas MacArthur.

On 5 September MacArthur had ordered all correspondents to vacate Tokyo and assemble in Yokosuka, where their activities could be more easily policed. However, George Weller of the

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[39] It should be noted that the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki coincided with the Potsdam Conference, at which Germany's future was discussed. Furthermore, the bomb also thwarted the Soviet Union's designs on Japan. See Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb.*
[40] Cited by Robert Jay Lifton & Greg Mitchell, *Hiroshima in America: Fifty Years of Denial*, pp 11-12.
[41] *Shadows of Hiroshima*, pp 41-42.
[42] *Ibid*, pp 20-22 & *At the Barricades*, p 115. See also Robert Jay Lifton & Greg Mitchell, *op cit*, pp 53-55; & Richard Tranter, "Burchett and Hiroshima", in Ben Kiernan (ed) *Burchett Reporting the Other Side of the World*, pp 23-25 & 28.

Chicago Daily News had avoided MacArthur's net and reached Nagaski on 6 September. Weller's 25,000-word despatch, based on interviews with doctors and eye-witnesses, never appeared in print. He had sent it onto MacArthur's censors who promptly "Killed" it.[43] On 8 September an officially sanctioned delegation of scientists inspected Hiroshima, while Farrell and Groves concocted a report on the delegation's behalf, stating that deaths from radiation were minimal. By 19 September, MacArthur had banned all reports on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, other than those sanctioned under his authority. In October a Japanese film crew slipped through the net, but their film was confiscated and shipped to the US. It was finally returned to Japan in 1968, so determined were the American authorities to suppress the other side of the story.[44]

The *Daily Express* had freely made available Wilfred's "atomic plague" story to newspapers throughout the world.[45] The onus was on individual editors to take up the offer. The Melbourne *Argus* declined. Throughout the war, Wilfred's articles had regularly appeared in the *Argus*, but this one was not to its liking. Despite minor moral reservations about the bomb's use, the paper considered it a "triumph of scientific patience and research", which had "subdued "the last of the world's criminal aggressors."[46] Rather than reporting on the bomb's victims, the *Argus'* was more concerned to hear the stories of Allied prisoners-of-war, surfacing from Japanese prison camps.

Wilfred, on his return from Hiroshima, had visited Australian troops in camps around Kyoto and Kobe.[47] So too had the *Argus'* George Johnston, though in the Yokohama area. He described the camps as "rat and disease ridden hovels", in which the inmates were subjected to "meagre food allowances, . . . painful tortures and brutal floggings." On hearing such news, the *Argus'* editorialists were certainly in no mood for forgiveness. They branded "the Japanese . . . [as] the personification of [evil]."[48] Not surprisingly, there was no place in the *Argus* for stories depicting them as victims. On 8 September, Johnston wrote from Tokyo about the disturbing spate of pro-Japanese reports being pushed onto western correspondents. Of particular concern was the *Domei* News Agency which "g[ave] newspapermen cleverly written news bulletins containing subtle Japanese propaganda, . . . which some newspapermen [were] using quite blindly." Johnston found the practice "slightly nauseating."[49] Undoubtedly, he had Wilfred's Hiroshima report in mind. Like the *Argus*, Johnson had hated the Japanese for far too long to forgive and forget. It was to Wilfred's credit that he overcame his own contempt to tell the other side of the Hiroshima story.

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[43] Groves and Farrell's statements appeared in the New York Times on 12 & 13 September 1945. See Robert Jay Lifton & Greg Mitchell, *op cit*, p 50 and Richard Tranter *op cit*, p 38.
[44] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, pp 23-24 & 57.
[45] Cited by Robert Jay Lifton & Greg Mitchell, *op cit*, p 51.
[46] The Melbourne *Argus* editorial, "A Miracle of Science", 8 August 1945.
[47] See Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 175; & Jim Vine's article on Burchett's visit in the Brisbane *Courier-Mail*, 11 September 1945.
[48] The Melbourne *Argus* editorial, "No Tomorrow for the Japs", 4 September 1945.
[49] George Johnston, "Need for Firmness Towards Japs", the Melbourne *Argus*, 8 September 1945.

In November 1945 Wilfred flew from Montreal to Blackbush on London's edge. After six years he was returning to Britain, and Erna and the children, to start family life. From Blackbush, he boarded a coach for Victoria Station, where the family was meeting him. Travelling into a foggy London, he was amazed that the streets were surprisingly intact. He noticed that there was "hardly any bomb damage", and "very few gaps in the rows of buildings."[50] But he was coming from gutted Tokyo and flattened Hiroshima.

As the coach approached Victoria Station he saw Rainer and Erna "peering anxiously into the fog." In the background stood Renate and Ruth, no longer children but young women. When Rainer spotted his father, he "jumped up and down excitedly." As Wilfred stepped from the bus, Ruth and Renate came over, and the latter remarked, "I wanted to guess which one would be you, but you didn't give me time." Rainer, too, confessed that he had not recognised Wilfred.[51] Later, Rainer recalled that he had placed a sign above the front door of the family's North-West London apartment, welcoming Wilfred home. But his father did not see it, and was forced to go back outside and make a more ceremonious entry.[52]

He was impressed by his new home. It was spacious, had a telephone and electricity, and was close to the centre of London. As he told his parents, "for these days we are really well off." He was also impressed by Rainer's "enormous vocabulary [and] general knowledge", and proudly mooted that the boy might be "a prodigy." Nonetheless, Wilfred was a stranger in their midst. He confided to his parents that while Rainer hazily "recognised [him] as the personality he knew in India and . . . Australia", the girls looked on him as a "mythical" character. He spent his early days away from the *Express*, playing with Rainer, and took Ruth and Renate to the pictures. The film was about the plights of French refugee children.[53] Perhaps the girls momentarily glimpsed his world before returning to their own and Erna's. She probably realised that the war had wrought irrevocable changes on each other's lives.

The *Express* gladly welcomed him back, but Wilfred was having trouble settling. The paper was considering revamping its foreign news format, and Christainsen wanted Wilfred to edit it. But he was not keen on a desk job in London. He told George that he was contemplating resigning, but management had persuaded him "to defer . . . [his decision] until Foley's return from the continent in December."[54] By early December, his status at the paper was "vague" and his mood gloomy. He had met with the editor of the *Sunday Express*, John Gordon, who off-handedly suggested that Wilfred should "take a few months leave of absence", travel around Germany, and "send us a story now and again." Wilfred's mood further darkened with news from abroad. On his return from the Pacific he had passed through New York, where he met Sherwood and presumably discussed his US publishing

[50] Letter from Wilfred to his "Mother and Father", London, 24 November 1945; BP, SLV.
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] *Ibid*; Conversation with Rainer Burchett, London, 30 June 1999.
[53] Letter from Wilfred to his "Mother and Father", *op cit.*
[54] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 118.

prospects. But by late November his overtures had been rejected. As he explained to George, a publisher had suggested that his work contained "[n]ot enough local interest, no American angle", [and was] not written in a style suitable for America." Angrily, Wilfred declared, "[Americans] are so self-satisfied with their own country that they are not much interested in anywhere else in the world."[55]

In the meantime, Cheshires was about to publish *Democracy With a Tommy Gun*, and had asked Wilfred to write a "Postscript."[56] It would seal his journey, which had begun with him rummaging through his ideas *en route* to Australia from India. It had traversed his flirtation with American 'know-how' in the Pacific, reeled at the barbarity of Hiroshima, and was now concluding, disillusioned, in post-war London. The career he had plotted and the post-war world he envisaged had not eventuated, so he wrote bitterly lamenting that the war had not tempered capitalism or ended imperialism. As he wrote, American planes were bombing communist-held Northern China, while British and French forces were suppressing local independence movements in the Dutch East Indies and Indo-China, respectively. Democracy, he declared, was being stifled, the aspirations of the "coloured" races thwarted, as imperialism re-established its hold. Nonetheless, Wilfred warned, another struggle was imminent, in which repressed peoples would take up "the tommy-gun [and] cross-bow" to fight for their democratic rights.[57] It was a prophetic remark, and in writing it Wilfred embarked on a more radical road, beginning in post-war Europe.

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The wartime alliance between the Soviet Union, the US and Britain was always destined to fracture once Hitler had been defeated. It had been based on practicality - the need to win the war - and not on a common ideology. After the war, conflict inevitably reared over the shape of the post-war world, and a colder war commenced. Nowhere was it more apparent than in Germany.

In 1941 the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, and the British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, discussed the possibility of a partitioned post-war Germany. Stalin was mindful that it would weaken Germany's capacity to menace Europe again. By mid-1943 the US State Department was also mulling over the prospect, noting its merits, yet concluding - with some foresight - that partitioning would politicise moves for German reunification.[58] But the US President, Franklin Roosevelt, supported partitioning, and in late November discussed it with Churchill and Stalin in Teheran. Sill welded by war, they agreed to divide and punish Germany. In Washington, the Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, had advocated the reduction of Germany to a pastoral economy, completely stripped of its industrial capacity. Roosevelt agreed with mutterings of "cast:at[ing] the German people" and their potential to disturb the peace. His sentiments resonated in the War Department's minimalist directive, JCS 1067, which recommended that German reconstruction should be restricted to avoiding disease

[55] Letter from Wilfred to "Mother & Father, 1 December 1945; BP, SLV.
[56] *Ibid.*
[57] Wilfred Burchett, *Democracy With a Tommy Gun*, p 286.
[58] See the State Department document, "H-24 Germany: Partition", 27 July 1943, cited by John H Backer, *The Decision to Divide Germany: American Foreign Policy in Transition*, p 20.

and disorder.[59] As peace approached, however, these punitive intentions were swamped by more pressing demands.

Of all the allies, the Soviets had suffered most at German hands. They had lost half of their industrial capacity, 45% of their agricultural output, and 20 million people, in contrast to 405,000 American and 375,000 British dead.[60] In bearing the brunt of the war, the Soviets wanted a substantial slice of the peace. When Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin met at Yalta in February 1945, Stalin recommended that Germany be billed $US20 billion for damages, of which the Soviets were entitled to half, comprising German industry and labour. If fully granted, the claim would have weakened Germany's future capacity to fend for itself, impeding its recovery, and increasing its reliance on American and British aid. Nonetheless, as Roosevelt's Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, later suggested, the Soviet proposal "did force us to preserve the economy in western Germany in close cooperation with the British."[61]

By late 1945 Germany had been occupied and partitioned, with the Americans apportioned the south-east: the Soviets, the agriculturally rich north-east; the British, the industrial north-western heartland; and the French, the south-western pocket. Each had also been designated a district in the capital, Berlin, encased within the Soviet zone. In July 1945 Truman, Stalin, Churchill and his Labour opposite, Clement Atlee, had met in the Berlin suburb of Potsdam.[62] All agreed on the necessity for "measures . . . to assure that Germany never again . . . threaten[ed] her neighbours and the peace of the world." It should be disarmed and demilitarised, Nazis removed from positions of responsibility in public and "important private undertakings", and its cartels, which had fuelled German militarism, dismantled. Countries that had suffered at its expense, were to be compensated, though resources were to maintained within Germany - after the repayment of reparations - "to enable the German people to subsist without external assistance", but at living standards not "exceeding . . . European countries." Most importantly, "Germany [was to] be treated as a single economic unit."[63]

But one-third of Germany's wealth had been destroyed, its industrial capacity decimated, and half its houses were uninhabitable. More disturbingly for the British and Americans, food production - worsened by the Soviet's appropriation of the agriculturally rich north-east - had shrunk to 60% of its pre-war tally, while half of the infants born in the American zone during the first year of the occupation died.[64] Hence, the Americans and British were confronted with a humanitarian disaster - which they also used for political gain - and so relinquished punitive intentions for the restoration of basic living standards in a productive, self-sufficient Germany. Unlike the Soviets, the Americans decided that

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[59] Cited by Edward J Peterson, *The American Occupation of Germany: Retreat to Victory*, p 37 & 39.
[60] Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War - The World & US Foreign Policy 1943-45*, pp 17 & 19.
[61] Cited by Bruce Krulick, *American Policy and the Division of Germany: The Clash with Russia Over Repatriation*, p 145.
[62] On 25 July Churchill was summoned to London, where he subsequently lost the British election. Clement Atlee completed the negotiations on Britain's behalf.
[63] See Charles L Mee Jr, *Meeting at Potsdam*, pp 320-325; Wilfred Burchett, *Cold War in Germany*, p 207; & John H Backer, *The Decision to Divide Germany: American Foreign Policy in Transition*, p 95

reparations should be paid not from the requisition of capital equipment, but from current production, which should also be bolstered to cover the occupiers' costs. Given their conflicting approaches and political philosophies, cracks in the wartime alliance invariably widened.

The *Express* stoutly supported the alliance's continuation. Its proprietor, Lord Beaverbrook, admired Stalin. Indeed, on the wall of Christiansen's office hung a photograph of Beaverbrook "hugging" the Soviet leader.[65] Inexorably, the *Express* maintained that sound relations with the Soviets were "far too important to be lost."[66] The paper was also committed to Potsdam and punishing the Germans. Nazism, in the opinion of columnist William Barkley, was "the most perfect expression . . . of the German mentality", and its "teeth" had to be painfully extracted.[67] But the paper's editorialists were also mindful that Germans had to be taught "self-help." Britain, exhausted by war, was struggling to feed itself, let alone provide for its German zone. Consequently, the *Express* pressed for a united and "self-sufficient" Germany, yet "utterly incapable of ever again being a threat to any of its neighbours." Until this was achieved, the paper warned, "the occupation w[ould] remain a burden."[68]

Wilfred, too, supported the continuation of the wartime alliance and Potsdam. He wanted Germany "purge[d]" of Nazism, "castrate[d] . . . as a future military force", and paying its dues for "war damage." And he was against reviving the German economy.[69] He arrived in Germany on New Year's Eve, 1945, joining Vaughan Jones and Selkirk Panton on the *Express'* German staff. As chief-of-staff, Panton covered the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal, while Jones roved the western zones. Wilfred was based in Berlin, where he cultivated contacts in the Soviet zone's military administration. Shortly after his arrival, he was among the first batch of western correspondents to tour the Soviet zone. Rumours were rife that the zone, in contravention of Potsdam, had been totally stripped by the Soviets, its inhabitants were starving because of ill-conceived land redistribution measures, and that the military was hounding the church and peasantry. Wilfred's reports, in keeping with the *Express'* position, sought to dispel these rumours. He wrote of the zone's "vitality" and contented, well-fed constituents; and suggested that while there had been some dismantling of industry, the amount was "well within the terms of the Potsdam Agreement." It, he stressed, was the Soviets' "Bible", and their adherence to it was indicative of their "genuine desire for continued friendship [and]. . . anxiety lest wartime unity should fall apart."[70]

But as 1946 dragged on that unity irreparably fractured. Within the Truman Administration there was justified concern that communism was on the march. In France, for example, the party's

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[64] *Ibid*, pp 115 & 118.
[65] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 119.
[66] "Opinion", the London *Daily Express*, 20 February 1946.
[67] William Barkley, "Hey! Just What is our Position in Germany", the London *Daily Express*, 16 January 1946.
[68] "Opinion", *ibid*, 1 March & 28 June 1946.
[69] Wilfred Burchett, *Cold War in Germany*, p 22.
[70] Peter Burchett, "German Dream Home Made From Ruhr Scrap", 20 January; & "The First time Stalin Opens the Door - Beyond Berlin, 21 January, 1946, the London *Daily Express*.

membership had trebled, while in Italy it had grown fivefold.[71] In early March, Churchill had told an American audience in Fulton, Missouri, that Soviet expansionism had cast "an Iron Curtain . . . across [Europe]."[72] Though no longer in power, his remark heralded the end of the wartime alliance.

On 22 July the *Express* "staff reporter" in Berlin - presumably Wilfred - suggested that the Americans were plotting to merge their zone with the British one. The initiative was to be the first in a series seeking to accomplish "a uniform economic policy" for Germany.[73] It was also a penny-pinching exercise. The British zone was costing Westminster £130 million annually to administer, of which only £50 million were being recouped from current German production.[74] With the Soviets refusing to accede to western initiatives for economic integration, the Americans, supported by the flagging British, entered into a 'bizonal' arrangement. For the British it would supposedly bring welcome financial relief, while for the Americans it ensured that western Germany remained capitalist, primed for US investment, and a buffer against communist expansionism.[75]

But Wilfred's despatches told a different story. He was against 'bizonalism', as it contravened Potsdam's pledge to treat Germany as "a single economic unit", and he seemingly shaped his stories to pander populist discontent against the arrangement. He warned that hidden within its finer print were additional costs to British taxpayers. Under the arrangement, American and British zonal administrations had agreed to increase the daily food ration in the joint zone from 1000 to 1500 calories which, on Wilfred's figures, would add "another £50 million" to Britain's German budget. If, as the plan proposed, the ration was eventually raised to 1800 calories, Wilfred estimated that British families would have to pay an extra £20 pounds annually 'to ensure . . . Germans d[id] not starve."[76]

Though the *Express* published Wilfred's views, its editorial position differed. Like Wilfred, it supported German economic unity as pledged at Potsdam. However, it had lost patience with the Soviets, blaming their intransigence for the impasse, and suggesting that if they were unwilling to make the necessary concessions, then western Germany should be revitalised "to the point where it could provide an industrial surplus for the purchase of food and raw materials."[77] On 23 October, the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, told the Commons that a strong German steel industry, under stringent international controls, was crucial to the European recovery. The *Express* concurred, considering Britain's present plight "intolerable", and suggesting that its and Europe's future prosperity were tied to the restoration of "Germany . . . as a producing entity."[78]

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[71] Gabriel Kolko, *op cit.*
[72] See "Churchill Urges Empire Alliance with US", the London *Daily Express*, 6 March 1946.
[73] 'Staff Reporter - Berlin', "Give All Germans Same Ration", 22 July 1946, *ibid.*
[74] See William Barkley's "Britain & US Zone for Trade", 30 July 1946, *ibid.*
[75] John H Backer, *ibid*, pp 95-96.
[76] Peter Burchett, "£50,000,000 More Called to Feed Germans", 10 October 1946, *ibid.*
[77] "Opinion", 14 October 1946, *ibid.*
[78] See *ibid*, 23 October & 1 November 1946.

In late October Wilfred was in Dusseldorf, discussing the new 'bizonal' structure with officers of the US Military administration. On asking whether the planned German economic revival contravened Potsdam, he was advised that the primary goal was now to get Germany back on its fect.[79] He left, further convinced that Potsdam had not been sunk by Soviet stubbornness, but through American and British machinations intended to keep western Germany capitalist and anti-communist. His suspicions were confirmed in early February 1947, when he received a 'leak' that British and American officials were plotting the establishment of "a new European state of Western Germany", with its capital at Frankfurt. Wilfred noted that the plan, if adopted, would slice Germany and eventually Europe.[80] He later recounted that he was summoned by a senior British diplomat with the Allied Control Commission, Christian Steel, who warned Wilfred that his report "play[ed] into the hands of the Russians."[81] Steel was undoubtedly aware that Wilfred had established a solid rapport with Soviet officials. Wilfred, however, was about to encounter one who was more than met the eye.

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Wilfred liked the Russians. Unlike the Americans, they were "polished and cultivated", with interests in "European literature and drama." In 1949, he remarked that during his time in Berlin he made about "half-a-dozen" close Soviet friends. Five of them were still in Berlin, but the sixth had been suddenly recalled to Moscow.[82]

James A G Nicoll knew Wilfred well in Berlin. Nicoll was attached to the Press Branch of the British Allied Commission. Together, they played tennis with the Soviet press liaison officer, Yuri Krotkov, at the Blau-Weiss Tennis Club, until the latter was abruptly summoned to Moscow. According to Nicoll, there was a feeling amongst "the Russians [that Krotkov] . . . was too friendly with some of us from the west."[83] Krotkov was a former *Tass* correspondent and an aspiring writer, and was in Berlin from May until November 1947.[84] In June, he had guided Wilfred, Denis Weaver of the *News Chronicle* and Reuter's Eric Bourne around the site of the former German rocket research station at Peenemunde. Stories had been circulating that the Soviets had not dismantled the station, as required under Potsdam, but had rebuilt it and were conducting tests of their own. Under Krotkov's watchful eye, Wilfred found that the station existed only in "name and rubble", and returned to Berlin convinced that "one more anti-Soviet story had been shot down."[85] In later years, Krotkov would concoct an anti-Soviet story of his own in which Wilfred was treacherously cast. Krotkov's story began at Peenemunde; and perhaps heralded Wilfred's own cold war.

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[79] See Wilfred Burchett, *Cold War in Germany*, p 209.
[80] Peter Burchett, "New State (West Germany) is Ready - Capital at Frankfurt", the London *Daily Express*, 6 February 1947.
[81] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 123.
[82] Wilfred Burchett, *Cold War in Germany*, pp 175, 178 & p 11.
[83] Letter from A G Nicoll to the author, 11 November 1997.
[84] Deposition of Yuri Krotkov (George Karlin), Supreme Court of NSW, 193 of 1973, Washington DC USA, 17 April 1974, p 12.

One chilly November afternoon in 1947, Wilfred sat alone, staring from a Berlin window. George, too, had sat at that window, but had recently returned to Australia after a year with Wilfred in Berlin. On a nearby table lay a letter to George, in which Wilfred remarked that "[t]here [were] no leaves on the trees at which you . . . gaze[d]." All was "bare and ominous, . . . waiting for the first great cold to start."[86] Gloomy and foreboding, it was written during one of Wilfred's bleakest spells.

In 1946, he had arranged for George and Mary to tour Europe. It was their first outing abroad, but while in Switzerland, Mary collapsed and died. George returned to Berlin and Wilfred, and together they worked through their grief.[87] With George's departure, however, Wilfred was left alone to sort through his troubles. Erna had not accompanied him to Berlin. After Ruth's detachment on returning from India, Erna was understandably reluctant to again disrupt the children's lives to follow Wilfred's career. As he sat and stared at the leafless trees, he might have realised that she and Rainer were drifting from his life.

He was also drifting away from the *Express*. His despatches had lurched to the left and were seldom published, though his work was still highly regarded by some at the paper. After returning from Germany, Nicoll joined the *Express* in 1951, and remembered that Foley, in particular, "appreciated, and took advantage of, [Wilfred's] ability to get the views of the Russians [and] East Germans . . . on major policy developments."[88] But there were others at the *Express*, and in Germany, who were eager to see Wilfred's back. In his letter to George, Wilfred mentioned that he had "survived something of a crisis" at the paper. Though he offered no details, Foley and senior correspondent, Sefton Delmer, had jumped to his defence. Both, according to Wilfred, praised his professionalism, and emphasised that although his work went "sometimes . . . against the current", it was "often . . . right." Despite this, Wilfred knew his days with the paper were numbered. As he told George, although he had survived this "crisis, there [were] plenty who could precipitate an even stronger crisis in Germany and against which I must be constantly on the alert."[89]

Wiilfred had grown justifiably critical of the American's failure to dismantle Germany's industrial cartels, and rid its bureaucracies and private establishments of Nazis. He later remarked that the Americans had kept "German heavy industry intact as a safe field for international investment and a strategic reserve in a future war against the Soviet Union"; while former Nazis, other than the party's elite, went unpunished to prosper in the new "Neo-Nazi Germany."[90] On the edge of the American zone was Bahn Zoo Station, where lurked the seedier side of Wilfred's neo-Nazism. It was "a Wellsian War of the World's stage set", inhabited by "long-haired vicious brutish types" devoid of any

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[85] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 60.
[86] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Berlin, 6 November 1947; BP SLV.
[87] See Anonymous, *He Chose Truth*, p 82.
[88] Letter from A G Nicoll, *op cit*.
[89] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, *op cit*.
[90] Wilfred Burchett, *Cold War in Germany*, pp 13-14, 141. For arguments supporting Burchett's view see Carolyn Woods Eisenberg's *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-1949*, p 129.

consideration for others. When trains arrived, people "f[ought] like wild animals to get at the doors", leaving in their wake "cripples[,] . . . women and children . . . [all] swept menacingly aside while muscle and brawn took over."[91] At the station, Wilfred glimpsed the coming world where might ruled, the fittest survived and the weak barely subsisted or perished. The station, to Wilfred, was symbolic of an approaching world order, dominated by American might, which had to be guarded against. He was coming to the realisation that peace had brought a more menacing world, and the Americans were to blame.

In mid-June 1948 the Americans introduced their own currency into the western zones, precipitating the Soviet blockade of Berlin and the American airlift. It marked the beginning of Wilfred's estrangement from Reiner and Erna, and the end of his career as an *Express* staffer, though the paper still retained his services on "a contributor basis." As he later recalled, "further functioning out of Berlin was impossible unless one was prepared to become a propaganda hack for cold-war handouts."[92] Even though he would be still based in Berlin, his focus had shifted to Eastern Europe's Peoples Democracies, where he hoped to find his better world.

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Wilfred reckoned that "there had never been a trial . . . like it."[93] Joseph Pehm was ordained a priest in 1919, taking the name Mindszenty. He inauspiciously served the parish of Zalaegerseg until 1944, when he was appointed the Bishop of Veszprem. In October 1945 he became Cardinal Mindszenty and - in the absence of the Hapsburgs - the Prince Primate of Hungary and heir to the crown of St Stephen. In February 1949, he faced the People's Court in Budapest on charges of high treason, conspiring against the state and black-marketeering.

Mindszenty's troubles had commenced in November 1945, when Hungary elected a coalition of liberal democrats, socialists and communists led by Zoltan Tildy's Smallholders Party. Given the government's composition, it inevitably sought leftist solutions to re-establish Hungary's war-ravaged agricultural and industrial sectors.[94] Prior to the war, the Church had been one of Hungary's largest landholders, with estates totalling half a million acres or 6% of the arable land. Tildy, however, introduced land reform, dismembering the nobility's estates and slashing the Church's holdings to 1000 hectares.[95] Moreover, on 1 February 1946, he proclaimed Hungary a republic.[96] Both measures eroded the Church's privileges, diminished its authority, and prompted western governments to distance themselves from Mindszenty. The British, eager to establish good relations with the new government, were mindful of Mindszenty's manoeuvres to undermine Tildy's authority.[97] Consequently, Foreign

[91] Wilfred Burchett, *ibid*, pp 104-106
[92] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 130.
[93] Wilfred Burchett, *People's Democracies*, p 101.
[94] Jorg K Hoensch, *A History of Modern Hungary, 1867-1994*, p 164.
[95] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 94; & Owen Chadwick, *The Christian Church in the Cold War*, p 67.
[96] Eric Roman, *Hungary and the Victor Powers*, p 10.
[97] See the letter from D G Osbourne, the British Legation to the Holy See, Rome, to the Foreign Office, London, 22 August 1946; FO 380/98.

Secretary Bevin instructed his legation in Budapest to "avoid contact with the cardinal."[98] The legation later advised London that Mindszenty was "doing grievous harm to his flock and to the Hungarian people", and suggested that the Vatican be urged to restrain him.[99]

By 1947 the coalition had fragmented. The Communists, under the leadership of Matyas Rakosi, had swallowed the Social Democrats and were at irrevocable odds with the Smallholders. A committed Stalinist, Rakosi was voted into office on 31 May with only 22.3% of the vote, and menacingly stated his intention to "oust reaction from the stronghold it [was] trying to build under the cloak of the Roman Catholic Church."[100] But as the Cold War gripped, and Rakosi pushed Hungary further leftwards, Mindszenty's stocks began to rise in the west.

To Wilfred, Mindszenty was a relic of the old Hungary, determined to halt the democratic tide that was swamping Eastern Europe under the Soviet's guidance. In Rakosi's Hungary, Wilfred noted, all were assured the right "to work, . . . land, [and] . . . a secure future", unlike Depression Australia or post-war western Berlin. There was real liberty, and not the token western freedoms of the ballot box or press, which merely entrenched establishment power, and "descend[ed] . . . as a rubber truncheon" when challenged by workers demanding their rights.[101] Economic security was for all under the communists and not the few, and had to be defended from reactionaries like Mindszenty and his co-plotters. While Hungary's Protestant churches had recognised the government's right to institute reforms, and in return were freely permitted to conduct their affairs, Mindszenty attempted to maintain the Church as his personal fiefdom in opposition to the state. Thus, Wilfred argued, the Church "became [a] centre of political intrigue and propaganda rather than [a] place of worship", and it "oppos[ed] every move to lift the people out of the[ir] mire of economic and cultural misery."[102] But there had been a discernible shift according to Wilfred, and those who had once "turned to the priests as the supreme authority on all matters, now . . . turn[ed] to the mechanics."[103] They were the new priests, bolting together a communist heaven on earth, under the peoples' saviour, Rakosi.

On a late summer's day in 1948, Wilfred travelled to Esztergom on the Danube River, the birthplace of Saint Stephen and the home of Mindszenty. Drawing on his association with the *Express*, Wilfred had secured an audience with the Cardinal who subsequently spoke on the "impossibility of any sort of cooperation with [a] government" riddled by "Jewish Bolshevism", and too intent on pursuing "materialistic" agendas.[104] "Better that the schools be closed and the children remain untaught", Mindszenty declared, than they be exposed to the state's godless teachings.[105] He pined for the return of the days of the Hapsburgs and the fascist Horthy, when Hungary was "a bastion against

[98] Cable from Bevin, Foreign Office, London, to Sir David Osbourne, 9 March 1946; *ibid.*
[99] Letter from A K Helm, British Political Mission, Hungary, to the Foreign Office, London, 30 July 1946; *ibid.*
[100] Jorg K Honesch, *op cit*, p 183; & cited by Roman, *op cit*, p 215.
[101] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 257.
[102] *Ibid*, pp 100 & 137.
[103] *Ibid*, p 174.
[104] *Ibid*, p 89 & Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 139.

Slavdom, [and] a bulwark against Communism." Now, he forlornly added, it "[was] to be split amongst barbarians." Wilfred later wrote that he left Esztergom convinced that Mindszenty was furtively plotting "a new war" and the return of the old order.[106]

Wilfred next saw Mindszenty in the People's Court in Budapest. Alongside the cardinal were several of his clerical colleagues and Prince Paul Esterhazy, once the owner of innumerable Hungarian estates, all of which had been severely sliced by the new government. Together, they reminded Wilfred of all that was "retrograde and obscurantist in old Hungarian society."[107] Embodied in them was the old order - spectral in the dock - politically condemned of subverting 'progress' and the peoples' democracy. Convicting the old would legitimate the new, and so the Peoples' Court set about publicly humiliating Mindszenty and his co-accused.

Wilfred had arrived in Budapest shortly after the trial began, and was greeted with "numerous messages" from Foley at the *Express*. Rumours were rife in the West that correspondents' reports of the proceedings were being distorted by Hungarian censors, and that Mindszenty was being fed a sinister "truth drug." Wilfred hurriedly reassured Foley that both were not so, and that the proceedings seemed genuine. Foley, subsequently, published Wilfred's reports.[108]

Wilfred did find the Cardinal "morose, ill at ease and glowering", but cunningly obsequious, certainly in control of his faculties, and "[giving] nothing away."[109] Prior to the trial, Mindszenty had prepared a statement, in which he "voluntarily admitted" committing the crimes, and suggesting that as a result the trial was unnecessary. For Wilfred, raised on a sterner Methodist God, it was a typical Catholic deathbed act; a quick confession and a moment's contrition, after which all would be forgiven and forgotten. But Judge Vilmos Olti dismissed Mindszenty's plea. Olti then presented documents showing the cardinal had profited from blackmarket currency dealings; plotted the old order's return with American diplomats and the Church's foremost Cold War warrior, Cardinal Spellman; and tried to lure the US-exiled Prince Otto von Hapsburg to return to Hungary and claim the throne. Not surprisingly, the Cardinal and his co-accused were found guilty and received hefty gaol sentences. Wilfred later remarked that Mindszenty, "stripped of his scarlet and privilege . . . appeared as a common criminal, a shifty parish priest caught out in anti-social crimes, trying to deny proven facts, [while] shifting the blame onto others where he could."[110]

In contrast, another Mindszenty was appearing in the West. There, he was a martyr for his faith, the victim of a brutal, godless communism and its politically tilted scales of justice. The Vatican had hastily dubbed the trial "a mockery", while Spellman accused the communists of torturing and drugging Mindszenty. In Washington, the US Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, had vented his

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[105] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 89.
[106] *Ibid*, pp 92 & 93.
[107] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 142.
[108] *Ibid*, pp 141-142 & *People's Democracies*, pp 126-128.
[109] *Ibid*, pp 101 & 111.

distaste, as had Bevin in the Commons.[111] In Melbourne, meanwhile, the Immigration Minister, Arthur Calwell - himself a Catholic - equated the trial with the persecution of the "early Christians." But the communist Melbourne *Tribune* steadfastly told Burchett's side of the story.[112]

On 6 February, the Hungarian Information Ministry issued an attack on the misrepresentations of the trial that were appearing in the western press. The Ministry was particularly disturbed about British Broadcasting Commission (BBC) reports claiming that despatches from British journalists had been doctored to cast the cardinal as guilty.[113] Of their own accord, 28 of the 30 western journalists covering the trial issued a joint declaration, denying the allegations and reinforcing "the integrity of [their] reporting."[114]

Some in the British Foreign Office, however, who were eager to use the trial to discredit the Rakosi Government, sought to influence the journalists. A K Helm of the British Legation in Budapest had been disturbed by newspaper reports suggesting that "the accused seemed . . . normal in appearance [and] . . . repl[ied] to all the questions coherently." The reports, he added, had also neglected to mention the cardinal's "ill-treatment" or the use truth inducers by his interrogators. Helm recommended a more "judicious use of daily and weekly press comment", avoiding "detailed discussion of the evidence", stressing instead that the trial was "an attack on the Church and not merely . . . the cardinal."[115] Questions of the latter's innocence or guilt would become lost, or at least muddied, amidst the debate over religious freedom, inflaming "anti-Government feeling" within and beyond Hungary.[116] But Helm cautioned London that "the cardinal's admission that he committed most of the actions of which he [was] accused [was] probably genuine and correct."[117] This side of the story was not to be told. To Wilfred's credit, he did so, but at great personal cost.

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Based on the Mindszenty trial, Wilfred's *The Changing Tide* was a woodenly plotted play, too intent on making a political point for its own dramatic good. It also told the story of the Kovacs family, God-fearing peasants who were caught in the conflict between Church and state. The Kovacs had a daughter, Margit. She had been the first in the family to attend university, where she studied agriculture. Being a model citizen of the new Hungary, she dutifully returned to her village on completing her degree and put the theories she had been taught into practice. She also stole the heart of

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[110] *Ibid*, pp 116-117.
[111] Cited in the *New York Times*, 5, 7 & 8 February 1949.
[112] The Melbourne *Tribune*, 12 February 1949.
[113] See the letter from A K Helm, Budapest Mission, to the Foreign Office, London, 6 February 1949; FO 953/557.
[114] The journalists' statement appeared in the *New York Times* on 6 February 1949.
[115] Letter from A K Helm, Budapest Mission, to the Foreign Office, London, 13 January 1949; & Cable from A K Helm, Budapest Mission, to the Foreign Office, London, 20 January 1949; *op cit.*
[116] Letter from A K Helm, Budapest Mission, to the Foreign Office, London, 13 January 1949; *ibid.*
[117] Confidential cable from A K Helm, Budapest Mission, to the Foreign Office, London, 5 February 1949, *ibid.*

the local mechanic and party member, Ferenc. Theirs' was a union of love and ideology, and so too was the one evolving between Wilfred and Vessa Ossikowska.

In early April 1949, Wilfred told George that he had found a woman who "embodie[d] all the specifications" he required. She was 29, a holder of doctorates in Literature and the History of Art from the University of Padua, and had served in the Bulgarian Fatherland Front and Italian resistance. "A tiny jewel of a woman", she also supported the Bulgarian Communist Party.[118] By June Wilfred had apparently divorced Erna, and was planning to marry Vessa in France.[119] They finally married in Budapest on Christmas Eve 1949. As with Margit and Ferenc, they were bonded by love and the cause, and the memory of Georgi Dimitrov.

A printer by trade and Stalinist by vocation, Dimitrov had led the Bulgarian Communist Party until his death in Moscow on 2 July 1949. He had initially risen to international prominence in 1933. Accused by the Nazis of involvement in the Riechstag fire, he stoutly rebuffed the charges under questioning from Goering and was acquitted. Exiled from Bulgaria, Dimitrov returned to the Soviet Union, from where he administered the Cominterm and later galvanised the Fatherland Front against Bulgaria's German-aligned King Boris. On 5 September 1944, the Soviets declared war on Boris and shortly afterwards marched into Sofia and installed the Fatherland Front in power. After 22 years in exile, Dimitrov returned to Sofia in 1945 and, over the ensuing years, savaged dissent and ensured that Bulgarian communism followed Stalin's line.

Blind to communism's brutal side, Wilfred considered Dimitrov a "gifted" and "selfless" man who had given his life to the cause.[120] On news of his death, Wilfed remembered that Bulgarians openly wept. Four days later, Wilfred watched Dimitrov's coffin pass through Sofia's streets. He remarked that the people had the "saddest looking faces I ha[d] ever seen."[121] According to Wilfred, he cabled a report on the funeral to the *Express*, but it was "revised to a few lines" and contained none of Dimitrov's achievements. After an angry exchange with Foley, Wilfred resigned and offered his services to the London *Times* as a 'stringer.'[122] James A G Nicoll, however, "always understood" that Wilfred was sacked "on the instructions of . . . Lord Beaverbrook, who decided he did not want his newspaper represented by a Communist."[123] If so, Beaverbrook was not the only newspaper proprietor or editor to take such a stand against Wilfred.

After Wilfred left the *Express*, he fleetingly freelanced for the *Christian Science Monitor*. In June 1950 he received a curt letter from the *Monitor's* foreign editor, Joseph E Harrison who had just received a report from Wilfred on the continuing conflict between the Church and state in Hungary. Harrison was not prepared to publish Wilfred's report, as it was "an indirect justification" of the

[118] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Budapest, 6 April 1949; BP, SLV.
[119] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Belgrade, 9 June 1949; BP, SLV.
[120] Wilfred Burchett, *People's Democracies*, p 228.
[121] *Ibid*, p 293.
[122] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 143.

Government's position. As an aside, Harrison had also received "unsolicited" information from a reliable "source" that whilst Wilfred was in Berlin, he had used his "pro-Communist" connections "to . . . trade with the Russians in automobiles." Though the *Monitor* was above "censor[ing] anyone's political outlooks", Harrison had to ensure "that each of [his] contributors [wa]s above suspicion . . . and . . . in a position to judge Communism from what might be described as a Western democratic viewpoint." As Wilfred's work too closely touted the Soviets' view, it was no longer acceptable at the *Monitor*.[124]

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On 19 April 1951 the British legation in Budapest received a booklet, *Warlike Preparations in Western Germany*, published by the Hungarian state-administered house, *Sjikra*, and written by Wilfred. The legation promptly sent the book to the Foreign Office, noting that it "appear[ed] to be a faithful echo of current Cominform propaganda . . . and [wa]s no doubt considered by Hungarian authorities as a timely contribution to the present 'Peace' campaign." Nonetheless, the Legation was surprised that the work was Wilfred's. It knew that while in Berlin he was sympathetic to the party, "if not actually a member", but had seemingly mellowed to "mildly left-wing" while in Budapest. Indeed, the Legation considered Wilfed's work for the London *Times* as "reasonably objective", which "made his present fall all the more surprising."[125]

The Foreign Office, seemingly preoccupied with weeding subversives from Fleet Street, advised the *Express* and *Times* of the booklet. Both papers were thankful, and somewhat relieved that the booklet only passingly mentioned Wilfred's past association with their papers. His "fall" from favour was complete in the West. Fearing international relations were to be dictated by American military might, his reports had shifted increasingly to the left, and by 1949 he was flirting with Stalinism. But he was not a crass ideologue by nature, but a romantic revolutionary who loved the cut and thrust of the ideological divide. As his star sunk in the West, it was rising in the East.[126]

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[123] Letter from Nicoll to the author, *op cit.*

[124] Letter from Joseph E Harrison, the Foreign Editor, *The Christian Science Monitor*, to W G Burchett, 9 June 1950, NAA6119/XR1, item 12, folio 48.

[125] Letter from the British Legation, Budapest, to the Foreign Office, London, 19 April 1951; FO 371/95233.

[126] See the letters from Alec Henderson, London *Daily Express* and Ralph Deakin, the London *Times*, to Peter Mathews, British Foreign Office, dated 2 May 1951; *ibid.*

Chapter 5 The Word as a Weapon

There was a Cold War bite in the air when Wilfred arrived at Melbourne's Essendon Aerodrome on 12 September 1950. Pushing an anti-communist agenda, the Liberals under Menzies had unseated Chifley's Labor Party in 1949 and, on 27 April 1950, had tabled in Parliament the Communist Party (CPA) Dissolution Bill. It sought the power to outlaw the CPA, and bar its members and fellow travellers from the public service and trade union movement. Furthermore, it inverted the Common Law's onus of proof. Those accused would be required to disprove their guilt rather than the Crown establish its case. By June the Bill had passed through Parliament, and the Government had instructed the Commonwealth Investigation Service (CIS) and the recently established Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) to list likely communists for detention on the Bill's enactment. George and Clive Burchett were certainly under scrutiny and probably listed. As they greeted Wilfred, a lurking CIS officer perceptively noted, "a family reunion was to take place."[1]

The Burchetts had gained a reputation in security quarters. George was under "periodic observation" because of his association with the Australia-China Co-operation Movement and his readiness to mingle with "Communists and persons of neo-liberal views."[2] So too was Clive: a member of the Building Workers' Industrial Union and CPA. During the war his mail had been regularly monitored by Defence Military Intelligence and, more recently, he had been mentioned - in passing - by a repentant former communist, Cecil Sharpley, during the 1949 Lowe Royal Commission's investigation into the CPA's activities in Victoria.[3] Winston was also under scrutiny. His politics, though marginally more respectable, were tainted by familial and other associations. He was the secretary of Labor's Essendon Branch and a stout supporter of the local MLA, Sam Merrifield, who had also been mentioned by Sharpley before the Commission, for allegedly passing details of discussions within the Victorian Labor caucus to known communists. Whilst Winston was on the staff of the Minister for Air, Drakeford', the Department's First Assistant Secretary, J C Perry, had initiated a CIS investigation into his politics. Perry was anxious to limit Winston's access to departmental files containing defence-related material. The investigation found that Winston, while not a communist, certainly was "pale pink if not near enough to a fellow-traveller." He later resigned, stating that he wished to spend more time with his growing family in Melbourne.[4]

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[1] Don Watson, *Brian Fitzpatrick, A Radical Life*, p 229; & David McKnight, *Australia's Spies and Their Secrets*, pp 18-119. ASIO memorandum from the Director, Melbourne to the Director, Sydney, 14 September 1950; NAA6119/XR1, item 12, folio 64.

[2] Confidential report entitled "Burchett Family" by J C McFarlane, Deputy Director of Security, 20 September 1943, *ibid*, items 59-64.

[3] See *ibid*, the letter from Clive Burchett to Pte H Cooper, 109 Independent Brigade, Group Ord. Workshop, New Guinea Forces, 29 December 1943, *ibid*, item 24; & the memorandum entitled "Communism - Trade Unions", from the Deputy Director of Security to the Director-General of Security, Canberra, 23 September 1943. See also the "top secret" memorandum entitled "Security of Defence Information" by the Deputy Director, Commonwealth Investigation Service, 29 July 1949, NAA6119/XR1, item 12, folio 66.

[4] *Ibid* & the secret memorandum from J C Perry, First Assistant Secretary, Department of Air, Canberra, to the Deputy Director, Commonwealth Investigation Service, Melbourne, 25 July 1949; *ibid*, folio 59. The author's conversation with Winston Burchett, 10 February 1997

But Wilfred was security's major concern, given his recent writings on Germany and the Peoples' Democracies, and his association with the Australian Peace Council (APC) and Democratic Rights Council (DRC). Both organisations housed communists and left-wing intellectuals, unionists and civil libertarians, and non-conformist clergymen, all concerned about mounting Cold War tensions and the consequential erosion of civil liberties. Affiliated with the World Peace Council (WPC), the APC had been founded in July 1949, and though touted as a communist-front organisation, eight of its 24 council members were either ministers of religion or associated with Christian bodies.[5] Nonetheless, the APC's calls for banning the 'Bomb' and peaceful co-existence, and its criticism of purported American warmongering in Europe and Asia, had attracted substantial CPA patronage. By mid-1950, the APC had joined with the communist-backed DRC to campaign against the Dissolution Bill, and the decision of the Immigration Minister, Harold Holt, to prohibit APC members and other likely subversives from travelling to communist countries.[6] Those gatherings, Holt later remarked, "provid[ed] a convenient opportunity for treacherous conspiracy and covert planning." Transgressors, he warned, would have their passports confiscated and "subsequent travel facilities" withheld at his discretion.[7] With the Communists ensconced in Peking, thrusting southwards in Korea, and threatening the French in Indo-China, the Menzies Government sought to bolster anti-communist resolve and sully the so-called Soviet-manipulated "peace offensive." One September Sunday morning in Melbourne's Wesleyan Church, Menzies warned that the "peace offensive" was "just as authentic and deadly as the communists' campaign in Korea", while its enticement of Christians was "a new and horrible blasphemy."[8] Labor, prompted by its Catholic right, agreed. In early 1950, Labor's NSW and Victorian Executives had barred party members from associating with the APC, and on 13 September the party's Federal Executive instituted similar measures against the DRC.[9] The following day, the DRC's Peoples Assembly for Human Rights gathered on Melbourne's Yarra Bank.

In mid-August, Wilfred had received an invitation to address the Assembly. The Secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions, Boleslaw Gerbert, had also been invited, but was refused a visa by Holt. According to the Melbourne *Guardian*, 8,000 people crowded the Yarra Bank to hear the Assembly's chairman and editor of the literary quarterly, *Meanjin*, Clem Christensen; the national president of the ACP, Richard Dixon; 'peace parsons' Frank Hartley and Alf Dickie; and social realist writers John Morrison, Frank Hardy and Eric Lambert condemn the bill as an affront to Australia's rich and democratic heritage. For his part, Wilfred lauded his cherished People's Democracies, and argued that given the current suppression of left-wing opinion, the "only way of getting to the people . . . [was] to talk to them direct, without editorial censorship." Freed from such constraints, his words were now weapons, suitably crafted for the cause. His contribution was fleetingly mentioned in the Melbourne

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[5] Barbara Carter, "The Peace Movement in the 1950s", in Anne Curthoys & John Merritt (eds), *Australia's First Cold War: Better Dead Than Red*, p 60.
[6] The DRC had been founded in 1948, and was led by the communist artist, Victor O'Connor. See Don Watson, *op cit*, p 228 & *Hansard*, 3 October 1950, p 206.
[7] *Hansard*, 15 & 14 November 1950, p 2312
[8] "Warning by Mr Menzies, Peace Groups are Fronts", the Melbourne *Age*, 4 September 1950.
[9] Barbara Carter, *op cit*, p 62 & the Melbourne *Age*, 13 September 1950.

Age, which had more pressing stories. UN forces had landed at the South Korean port of Inchon and were pushing towards Seoul.[10]

The bill became law on 20 October, and shortly afterwards ACP offices throughout Australia were raided by ASIO and CIS agents.[11] Meanwhile, Wilfred, closely monitored by security, had embarked on a lecture tour, spreading the word about peoples' democracy, and American and British warmongering activities in Germany.[12] In early December he returned to Melbourne, where he intended to address meetings at the Melbourne Town Hall and throughout the city's suburbs. On 25 October, however, the Melbourne City Council had rejected an application by tour organisers for Burchett's use of the Town Hall.[13] Subsequent approaches to the Lord Mayor, Sir James Disney, and the Victorian Labor Premier, John Cain, failed to rescind the decision.[14] Disney had been a member of the Australian Flying Corps during the First World War, and had recently used the Town Hall to bolster recruitment for Korea. Not surprisingly, he advised Wilfred's handlers that the hall would not be let for gatherings campaigning "against the principles of the United Nations."[15] Other councils followed suit, and so Wilfred defiantly staged his meetings on the steps of the municipal halls from which he was barred.[16] But as the campaign against the Communist Party Dissolution Act entered its most crucial phase, Wilfred suddenly left Australia in mid-February 1951.

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On 16 April Wilfred wrote, apologetically, to George from Peking. George had been disappointed by Wilfred's sudden decision to leave Australia while the campaign was still in progress.[17] But Wilfred had more pressing concerns. Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in October 1949, he had being trying to organise a visit. Shortly after the Communists seized power, he had approached - without success - the London *Times* about the possibility of covering the new China.[18] His former Chungking colleague, Betty Graham, had settled there, and Wilfred approached her for advice on securing a visa. Fortuitously, he had renewed his British passport in May 1950,

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[10] "Unions Back Human Rights Assembly, the Sydney *Tribune*, 19 August 1950; "World-famed Australian author is Flying Here for Big Rights Rally", the Melbourne *Guardian*, 25 August 1950; "2000 Rally at Yarra Bank", the Melbourne *Age*, 15 September 1950; "Artists, Writers Call for Defeat of Fascist Bill" & "Thousands at Night Rally - Fighting Opening for Vast Assembly", the Melbourne *Guardian*, 22 September 1950.

[11] See David McKnight, *Australia's Spies and their Secrets*, pp 44 &118-119.

[12] See report by ASIO's B1 NSW Branch entitled "Wilfred Burchett", 20 November 1950; *ibid*, items 102-103. See the ASIO report from the Officer-in Charge, Tasmania, to the Director-General, Melbourne, 28 November 1950. The shadowing agent noted that from Burchett's appearance he was a "heavy drinker and possibly a drug addict." Burchett was also overheard telling his travelling companion, Frank Hartley, that "somebody at Melbourne University was selling the names of the socialist minded for 3/- per head." NAA *op cit*, items 106-110.

[13] Letter from the Melbourne City Council to Miss M A Horsley, 25 October 1950, BP SLV.

[14] "Protest move on hall ban", the Melbourne *Argus*, 11 December 1950.

[15] The Melbourne *Age*, 4 October 1950.

[16] "Wilfred Burchett to Speak Outside Oakleigh Town Hall", the Melbourne *Guardian*, 11 January 1952.

[17] See the letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Peking, 16 April 1951, BP SLV.

[18] See the letter from Ralph Deakin, the London *Times*, to Peter Mathews, British Foreign Office, 2 May 1951; FO 371/95233.

whilst in Budapest. The British Government, unlike its Australian counterpart, had recognised the People's Republic in January 1950. But the renewal had been issued in error, a fact that eluded Australian Immigration authorities. The Australian *Nationality & Citizenship Act* had come into force in January 1949, and under it, Australian-born were required to travel on Australian passports.[19] Betty Graham subsequently reassured Wilfred that his "old friends" in the Chinese Communist Party had not forgotten him, and by mid-February 1951 he was *en route* to Peking, where he intended to collect material for a book and articles.[20] With a touch of self-justification he told George, "everybody seems interested that I do this, from the papers I represent to my Chinese hosts." Somewhat guiltily, he reassured that he would eventually return to Australia, but "at the moment, I think I can make my maximum contribution here."[21] On 9 March, the High Court ruled the Dissolution Act unconstitutional, and it appeared that Wilfred's decision had been vindicated. But Menzies called a referendum for the following September. The fight was to be resolved at the ballot box, which might explain the apologetic tone of Wilfred's mid-April letter.

But the tone might have masked deeper, less magnanimous motives behind the journey. Wilfred was not one to bother with life's minutiae. He liked to be around the cuts and thrusts of history's grander moments. But after several tumultuous years, which had transformed the careerist into a crusader, unresolved personal problems were beginning to catch up with him. China would hopefully provide the sanctuary to escape them, and the security to reorder his life. Shortly after his departure, Erna wrote to Wilfred and George on undisclosed personal matters. Such was the tone of her letter to George that he urged Wilfred to hastily respond. Perhaps she dealt on Wilfred's financial affairs. He had been contributing to the welfare of Rainer, Ruth and Renate, and Erna might reasonably have queried whether this would continue whilst Wilfred was semi-gratuitously supporting causes in Australia and China. She might also have mentioned Wilfred's failure to tell Rainer of his marriage to Vessa. Whatever the contents of her letters, they soured Wilfred's memory. In China he sought to selectively forget his past, and forge a new life in a new society. He told George that China "will solve my personal problems." It would also reunite him with Vessa. Bulgarian authorities had initially refused her request to leave the country and accompany Wilfred to Australia. Permission, however, had been belatedly granted, and she was bound for Peking that "summer." Her arrival, he added "will make my life complete again."[22]

When he approached the Chinese border at Kowloon, the year of the Tiger gave way to the Hare. Behind him was decadent Hong Kong, "a museum piece of British imperialism." Wandering its streets he had seen the dispossessed missionaries and *Kuomintang*, "remnants of an era which [had] past", and buildings draped with film hoardings, advertising the "usual American fare of rapes, murder

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[19] See Section 25 (1) of the Australian *Nationality & Citizenship Act 1948-1960*.
[20] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 153.
[21] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Peking, 16 April 1951, BP SLV.
[22] *Ibid.* For details of Vessa's travel problems see *At the Barricades*, p 153. Wilfred's failure to inform Rainer of his marriage to Vessa was mentioned during the author's interview with Rainer Burchett on 30 June 1999.

and gangsterism."[23] Once Wilfred had embraced American 'know-how' and Chiang's China, but on the cusp of his new life he selectively excised them from his past. He crossed the border, convinced of the moral and ideological righteousness of the road ahead, and that time would vindicate it and him.

By late February he was in Peking, mingling with old friends. The New Zealander, Rewi Alley, had settled there, as had the Syrian-born, American-educated doctor, George Haitem. There was also the mercurial Indian ambassador, N K Pannikar. But Betty Graham had taken her life the day before Wilfred arrived. She had apparently grown depressed after the suicide of her close friend, the American writer, Agnes Smedley, whose landmark works on revolutionary China were lauded by the left but cursed by the right. Branded as a Soviet agent on her return to her homeland, Smedley fled to London, where she ended her days. Wilfred learned that Graham had wanted to return to the US, but feared that she too would be subjected to the same savaging. To complicate matters, Wilfred discovered that she had been recently jilted by "a western journalist", rumoured to be the London *Daily Worker's* Alan Winnington.[24]

Nine years had elapsed since Wilfred's last visit, and he found "the fullest flowering of humanity" blooming under the communists. He told George that there "is such humanity and beauty in life here, such tolerance and understanding, that I feel very small and conscious of my inability to express in print what is going on." The Communists had "eliminate[d] every tiniest injustice", and each person now contributed "according to [their] ability" and, in turn, was rewarded on their needs. Being an "honoured foreign guest", Wilfred was "relieved of [the] financial cares" that had beset him in the west. All of his necessities - "from food, to writing paper and typewriter ribbons" - were supplied by the government, and he had the "facilities to . . . travel where [he] want[ed] to travel, [and] interview whom [he] want[ed] to interview." [25] Communist China had accepted him and, in gratitude, he re-wrote his past to accommodate it. In mid-March, he told the Chinese Peace Committee that though "Australia was spared . . . a Japanese invasion", it had "suffer[ed] . . . an American [wartime] occupation", with its accompanying "gangsterism and corruption."[26] He neglected to mention his unwavering commitment to that "occupation" and the American fleet in the Pacific. Instead, he renounced that past. He was now a revolutionary writer.

For three months he travelled through China's fields and factories, and over its vast engineering projects, noting the revolution's achievements. He was told of the 1950 floods in Anhwei and Honan. Five million tons of grain had been lost and 13 million people forced from their homes. He travelled through the affected areas, heard of the cursed flood and famine cycle, and wrote on the

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[23] Wilfred Burchett, *China's Feet Unbound*, pp 11-13 & 77.
[24] In *At the Barricades* Burchett discreetly remarks that Graham's affair was with a "Western correspondent", neglecting to mention that it was apparently Winnington. See *At the Barricades*, p 155 & Peter Rand's *China Hands*, p 217. Rand was told the story by Hugh Deane, an American correspondent who was in China with Graham.
[25] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 15 April 1951; BP SLV.
[26] "China Peace Committee held meeting in honour of three Asian delegates", *New China News Agency*, 24 March 1951, NAA6119/XR1, item 12, folios 136-138.

efforts of Mao's technical cadres to outwit it. Perched on a dam wall over the Huai River - a noted killer in flood - he watched three million peasants and 10,000 cadres recast this "merciless tyrant" into "a useful servant" with their bare hands.[27] Antlike, they scurried beneath him, "digging, camping, ramming, singing and chanting as they worked." The scene, he added, was "the most powerful impression of human activity I have ever experienced." As he walked amongst the workers, he was met with cursory glances and abrupt shouts of "'[l]ong live Chairman Mao.'" All were one with the revolution and sought, in Mao's honour, to make nature accountable to the "needs of the people."[28] Exultantly, Wilfred wrote to George of these vast pioneering projects and "the great unity of [the Chinese] people" under the communists.[29] He had seen glimpses of this unity on the Burma Road and in his 'real China.' But on the Huai it had been mustered to shape the new, progressive China.

Whilst there, he met a young, earnest female cadre, Chien Chen-ying, who stressed that as a "foreign friend", Wilfred was obliged to tell "the world" of the revolution's achievements.[30] As with all writers in revolutionary China, Wilfred's words were "weapon[s]" in the "fight for peace" and "the upward striving of humanity." Under the communists, Wilfred declared, artists and writers had left their "ivory tower[s]", shunned the elitism of "art for art's sake", and ventured "among the people [to] learn from them." Consequently, art and literature encompassed everyday life and its struggles, "in images and languages that the masses could understand."[31] Writers, like Wilfred, fostered on social realism, followed the formula and received state support. But, invariably, the bent of their work accorded with the revolution's requirements.

When Menzies' referendum was defeated by the barest of margins on 22 September, Wilfred was still in China.[32] In mid-December he wrote to George from Peking, declaring that he was "better looked after than ever before[,] . . . surrounded by comradely love which must be experienced to be really appreciated, [and] by people who think of my every want and do their best to fulfil them before I'm even aware of it.[33] His personal problems had apparently passed for the time being, and he had completed *China's Feet Unbound*. It claimed to lift the "iron curtain" which the capitalist press had drawn around the People's Republic.[34] The Chinese had indulged Wilfred, and he had glowingly recompensed them in words. But his work on the revolution's behalf was not yet finished.

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[27] Wilfred Burchett, *China's Feet Unbound*, pp 145-146, 153 & 170. For further details on the Huai River project see Burchett's article, "Huai River turned after 2000 years", Sydney *Tribune*, 12 September 1950.
[28] Wilfred Burchett, *ibid*, pp 158-159 & 154.
[29] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Undated; BP SLV.
[30] Wilfred Burchett, *ibid*, p 182.
[31] Wilfred Burchett, *ibid*, pp 78-80 & p 108.
[32] For a referendum to succeed, it must receive a majority of votes in the majority of states. In this case, Menzies' proposal fell 52,082 votes short, while only three of the six states supported it.
[33] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 18 December 1951; BP SLV.
[34] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, pp 253-254.

Oddly enough, the Korean War was not on Wilfred's itinerary. He had intended returning to Australia, but on 30 June 1951 the American Commander-in-Chief of the UN Forces, General Mathew Ridgway, declared his willingness to discuss a ceasefire, and by 8 July Communist and UN negotiators had gathered in the old Korean capital of Kaesong. The French Communist Party's evening newspaper, *Ce Soir*, had approached Wilfred to cover the negotiations, and he accepted. A close friend advised him to travel lightly, as the talks should not extend beyond three weeks.[35]

On the evening of 13 July Wilfred crossed the Yalu River and entered Korea. He was bound for Pyongyang with members of the Chinese press corps and Alan Winnington. He and Wilfred might have mentioned Betty Graham's suicide, but more than likely they chatted about Winnington's coverage of the Chinese revolution, his dealings with the country's communist leaders, and his controversial pamphlet on the massacre of 7000 communist political prisoners by UN forces near Taejon in August 1950. Entitled *I Saw the Truth in Korea*, the pamphlet prompted the British Government to consider charging Winnington and the *Daily Worker* with treason. Time, however, has substantiated the pamphlet's claims.[36] Whatever the pair spoke about on the road south, it marked beginning of a collaboration that irrevocably altered their lives.

By 22 July Wilfred was in Pyongyang and within days *en route* to Kaesong. Scattered along the side of the road, he noted the shells of burnt-out trucks, tanks and houses, gutted by the US Airforce's latest weapon, napalm. "Not even the smallest hamlet had escaped [the] attention" of US planes, he wrote. In Kaesong hospitals, churches, schools and public buildings lay in ruins, while "apathetic looking citizens [sat] forlornly at impoverished stalls" amidst the rubble.[37] Like Hiroshima, this was war stripped of the human dimension, no longer a test of manhood, but of the latest killing technology, inflicted without a thought or a whimper for its victims.

Neatly attired in slacks and white shirts, Wilfred and Winnington motored into the conference site. *Time* reported that they "look[ed] as if they had just come from an afternoon of punting on the Thames." Winnington, according to the Sydney *Daily Telegraph's* Eric Downtown, "[gave] the impression of having strayed into a uniformed gathering from the Riviera", whilst Burchett seemed more taciturn, concerned only for the welfare of the Chinese. The pair were quickly dubbed the "Caucasian commies."[38] It was a reminder that Korea was a race, as well as an ideological war. Koreans were 'gooks', childlike, and, most ominously, everywhere. Friend and foe were indistinguishable, and Korean lives were cheap. Civilians were justifiable targets to undiscerning American soldiers schooled on myths of the frontier and manifest destiny, and the superiority of their

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[35] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 161.
[36] Alan Winnington, *Breakfast with Mao - Memoirs of a Foreign Correspondent*, pp 115-117. See also Gavan McCormack, *Hot War Cold War*, pp 129.
[37] Wilfred Burchett, *This Monstrous War*, pp 166 & 170.
[38] Extract from *Time* entitled "A Personal Question", 6 August 1951, Pacific Edition, NAA6119/XR1, item 12, folio 158. Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 164. See the document marked "COPY", Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, 23 August 1951, NAA *ibid*, folio 163; & "Australian at talks with Reds", Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, 26 July 1951.

white skin. American pressmen were not immune from such sentiments. The distinguished London *Daily Telegraph* correspondent, Reginald Thompson, noted that "the dearest wish" of some of his more sanguinary colleagues "was to kill a Korean."[39]

Though Burchett and Winnington were ideologically opposed to the UN correspondents, they were racially akin, and exploited this to put the communist position to the West. This obviously brought them into conflict with the UN Command's press liaison officers who considered journalists a subordinate arm of the military campaign. Though there was no strict censorship code, the US Army had issued an instruction in July 1950 forbidding criticism of UN commanders or the conduct of Allied troops in the field. Relations became strained after November 1950, when Chinese troops crossed the Yalu and pushed MacArthur's forces to the peninsula's southern tip. The UN's press liaison officers maintained that the war was still going well, and tried to gag the press from reporting the true story. When Winnington and Burchett arrived in Kaesong, with ample access to the Communist delegation, many western correspondents, who had been forced to survive on the UN's slim briefing notes, inevitably sought the pair's views.

The talks had commenced on 10 July and immediately stalled as each side intractably pushed their agenda. A five-point agenda was finally adopted, and on 27 July discussion commenced on the whereabouts of a ceasefire line. The North Korean head of the communist negotiating team, General Nam Il, had proposed that the line should be based on the 38th Parallel. Given that the current battleline loosely draped around the Parallel, with the UN Forces situated to the north in the country's east, and the communists to the south in the west, Nam Il considered it the fairest option. But his UN counterpart, Admiral C Turner Joy, proposed a line 25 miles north of the Parallel, along a 150 mile front, to compensate for the UN's naval and air superiority. This was unacceptable to the Communists, because it required them to surrender heavily fortified positions north of the battleline.

As these sessions were closed, their contents became matters of conjecture amongst the press. According to Wilfred, UN correspondents were growing puzzled over what exactly was being proposed and by whom. The UN's press liaison officer, Brigadier William P Nuckols, had misleadingly told correspondents that the communists had refused to discuss the 38th Parallel option.[40] Wilfred and Winnington were afterwards invited into the UN correspondents' briefing tent to contrast both proposals.[41] As a result, on 22 August the Associated Press's Robert Tuckman revealed that Joy was seeking 13,000 square kilometres of communist-held territory.[42]

As the negotiations dragged on, the fighting continued, with the villages around Kaesong being constantly bombed. Wilfred was convinced that the combination of protracted negotiations and intensive bombardment indicated that the Americans were seeking a military victory rather than a

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[39] Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty*, p 338. Knightley cites from Thompson's *Cry Korea*, p 39.
[40] Wilfred Burchett, *This Monstrous War*, p 176.
[41] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 189.
[42] *Ibid*, p 190; & *This Monstrous War*, p 180.

negotiated settlement. He and Winnington were housed with the communist delegation on Kaesong's outskirts in a supposedly neutral zone. On the evening of 22 August, Wilfred was settling in for the night, when startled by "the sharp, shattering sound of bombs exploding nearby." The bombs had landed near Nam Il's quarters, and one had damaged his jeep. The UN Liaison Officer, Colonel Andrew J Kinney, was summoned to investigate and, according to Wilfred, dismissed the communist explanations of the raid in "contemptuous tones of racial arrogance."[43] Subsequent radar checks revealed that American aircraft were not in the area at the time of the incident, yet Joy noted in his diary that it was "reasonable to assume that some aircraft were in the immediate vicinity of Kaesong." Cautiously, Joy added, that it seemed "debatable" that the incident was "manufactured" by the communists.[44] Wilfred was in no doubt. He considered the attack, coupled with Kinney's dismissive inspection, as part of an American campaign to wreck the talks. Nam Il promptly cancelled the following day's session. It heralded two months of tit-for-tat exchanges, during which formal dialogue was suspended.[45]

On 23 August, the Korean communist leader, Kim Il Sung, and the commander of the Chinese Volunteers, Peng Teh Huai, issued a statement accusing UN forces of orchestrating the incident. Based on the failure of Kinney's investigation to substantiate the communist story, Joy recommended that Kim and Peng be informed that the bombing was "a [communist] fabrication."[46] On 1 September Ridgway responded, accusing Peng and Kim of "intentionally" making "false and baseless" allegations that "impugned the good faith of the United Nations forces." Ridgway suggested that "if the incidents did in fact occur they were presumably initiated and perpetuated by your forces . . . to provide spurious evidence for false and malevolent accusations against the United Nations Command." Furthermore, he "could not provide guarantees against . . . the occurrence of incidents deliberately and maliciously manufactured by your forces under your control." Such displays of "deceit and invective", Ridgway added, exemplified that the communists were to blame for ending the talks.[47]

The tone of his response disturbed the UN's allies and incensed its enemies. The Australians considered it "unnecessarily provocative." Given that the communists had not stated their intention to end the talks, the Australians suggested that "reasonable restraint [was] desirable." They also recommended that Ridgway should issue a "public assurance that all South Korean aircraft were accounted for at the time in question."[48] Wilfred shared his countrymen's concerns. He considered Ridgway's reply "arrogant and insulting", and feared that an escalation in hostilities was imminent with the possibility of another world war.[49] On 29 August he had watched as UN aircraft dropped flares

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[43] *Ibid*, pp 183-186.
[44] Admiral C Turner Joy, *Negotiating While Fighting: The Diary of Admiral C Turner Joy at the Korean Armistice Conference op cit*, p 34.
[45] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 196.
[46] Admiral C Turner Joy, *op cit*.
[47] "General Ridgway's Reply to the Communist Commander - Message of 1st September", Tokyo 6 September 1951; K1071/804, FO371/92793.
[48] Memorandum from Australia House Command to the British Foreign Office, 1 September 1951; K1071/905, *ibid*.
[49] See Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 168.

over the zone, and two days later witnessed another bombing raid.[50] Again Kinney was summoned. While Wilfred looked on, Kinney heard witnesses tell that American aircraft were responsible. That night, Turner Joy wrote in his diary: "All civilian witnesses were obviously coached." Nonetheless, he was aware that UN radar had tracked an aircraft, which had dived towards Kaesong at the time of the bombing, and that the bomb fragments found at the scene were American-made. Yet, he maintained, UN forces were not responsible.[51]

On 11 September Kim and Peng condemned Ridgway's response. They also alleged that UN aircraft had committed 31 incursions of the neutral zone between 17 and 30 August, and another 139 during the first week in September, and they demanded an end to these provocations.[52] On 10 September, aircraft again strafed the zone and, on this occasion, Ridgway admitted responsibility. Joy had received a report showing that UN aircraft were overhead at the time, and had mistakenly "strafed some lights" near the communist delegation's headquarters. He and Ridgway agreed "that [they] should make a clean breast of [their] responsibility", and the latter issued an apology, emphasising that the attack was caused by the "pilot's error."[53] But Wilfred was unimpressed. Over Peking Radio he told of how the "plane had circled low before selecting its target and circled again to make its attack." In his opinion, the "attack was just as deliberate as the previous . . . attacks on Nam Il's headquarters."[54]

Ridgway's apology coincided with the appearance of a curious article in the London *Times*. It suggested that the agreement over the zone's neutrality applied only to ground troops and not aircraft. The British Foreign Office was totally unaware of this and obviously disturbed. It considered that the presence of aircraft over the zone, especially those on offensive missions, increased the risk of such attacks and "g[ave] colourable pretext" to the communists' allegations. The British Ambassador in Washington, Sir Oliver Franks, was asked to raise the matter with the US State Department, and was subsequently advised that the *Times* report was correct.[55] The State Department conceded to Franks that flights over the zone had occurred, though it rejected communist assertions that they were "hostile acts." Franks reassured London that Ridgway had since instructed UN aircraft not to "fly in the general vicinity of Kaesong at an altitude lower than 7000 feet."[56]

The Foreign Office was astounded by Franks' findings. The Far Eastern Department's R J Stratten noted that "the concept of a neutral zone pre-suppose[d] that neutrality should extend to the

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[50] Wilfred Burchett, *This Monstrous War*, p 192 & 195.
[51] Admiral C Turner Joy, *op cit*, p 38. Turner Joy noted in his diary that the bomb fragments probably came from a bomb captured by the communists in Pyongyang.
[52] Kim Il Sung & Peng The Huai, "Comment on Commander's Reply to General Ridgway's Message of 6 September 1951", 11 September 1951; K1071/812, *op cit.*.
[53] Admiral C Tuner Joy, *op cit*, p 41; & the Reuter's cable dated 11 September 1951, Tokyo; K1071/815, *op cit*.
[54] "Radio Press", Radio Peking, 13 September 1951, as monitored by the Japanese Liaison Section, G-2; NAA6119/XR1, item 13.
[55] See the "confidential" cipher from the Foreign Office, London, to the British Embassy, Washington, 12 September 1951; K1071/815(a), *op cit*.
[56] Cipher from Sir Oliver Franks, British Embassy, Washington, to the British Foreign Office, London, 13 September 1951; K1071/816, *ibid*

airspace over it", adding that the American position made communist claims "more difficult to discount categorically."[57] On 22 September Franks informed London that he had again discussed the matter with the State Department's Far Eastern Bureau, and was told that the communists were massing troops behind Kaesong. The Bureau emphasised that given the "importance of securing information about this . . . it w[as] not . . . easy to guarantee against flying over the zone, since jet aircraft turning at speed were likely to sideslip miles."[58] Consequently, accidents occurred and the odd angry shot was fired, making Wilfred's claims all the more believable.

On 12 October he was walking on the "western outskirts of Kaesong", when he was forced to shelter from strafing American planes.[59] The subsequent investigation established that three US Airforce fighters had strafed the zone and a road outside nearby Panmunjon, killing a 12 year old boy and injuring his two year old brother. Joy was advised that "the incident was *bona fide*", and promptly shouldered "responsibility." He was now eager to resume the talks, and not get "sidetracked on the question of past incidents."[60]

On 25 October, the talks reconvened at Panmunjom after a 70-day adjournment. During that period, a UN offensive led by General James Van Fleet had attempted to secure UN claims north of the 38th Parallel. Wilfred justifiably contended that the offensive's failure forced the Americans to resume negotiations.[61] Despite this, debate on the ceasefire line still faltered, particularly as the UN were now claiming Kaesong. Once again, Wilfred accused the American negotiators of deceit. Over Peking Radio he revealed that while the Americans were publicly stating that they "wanted the line along the battle-front", they were privately "demanding 12,000 square kilometres" of communist territory.[62]

Knowing both sides of the story, again placed Wilfred and Winnington in demand from their UN accredited colleagues.[63] Wilfred later remarked that "most responsible [UN] journalists hardly dared send [their stories] without checking with us [for] . . . accuracy."[64] He told George that while Nuckols and the International News Service's (INS) Far Eastern director, Howard Handlemann, attempted to "smash" his and Winnington's activities, UN correspondents "were virtually crawling on their hands and knees [to us] . . . begging for crumbs of information." With a hint of malice, he added, "[w]e were in the lovely position of ignoring those who had tried to injure us, and handed out priceless

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[57] Minute by R J Stratten, 17 September 1951; K1071/810, *ibid.*
[58] "Confidential" telegram from Franks, British Embassy, Washington, to the Foreign Office, 22 September 1951, K1071/824, *ibid.*
[59] Wilfred Burchett, *This Monstrous War*, p 219.
[60] Admiral C Turner Joy, *op cit*, p 59
[61] Wilfred Burchett, *This Monstrous War*, p 201.
[62] "Burchett's dispatch of agreement on point two of agenda", Peking Radio, 24 November 1951; NAA *op cit.*
[63] See "Burchett says truth of conference not being told to world", Peking Radio, 17 November 1951; *ibid.*
[64] Wilfred Burchett, *This Monstrous War*, p 221.

information to the few who had written honestly about the talks." The former, he declared, "will learn or go under."[65]

By late November both sides had agreed that the current line of contact should constitute the demarcation line. If agreement on other agenda items was not reached within 30 days, however, the line would be drawn along the battle-front on the cessation of hostilities and the signing of an armistice. To Wilfred, it was an unsatisfactory outcome, dogged by the American negotiators who had "resisted . . . every step of the way", and "conceal[ed] their wholly unjustified attempts to grab large areas north of the battle-line." He had become convinced that the UN Command "considered an armistice . . . tantamount to defeat."[66] With the debate on the line settled, for the moment, the talks moved onto other matters, the most contentious of which was the exchange of prisoners-of-war.

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On 14 November 1951 the head of the US Eighth Army's Judge Advocate Section, Colonel James Hanley, alleged that the communists had massacred 250,000 Korean civilians, numerous South Korean troops and 5,700 prisoners-of-war, of whom the overwhelming majority were Americans. It was "a record of killings and barbarism unique in the communist world", declared Hanley. By 20 November Ridgway had significantly sliced Hanley's figures. Of the 10,846 Americans listed as missing, Ridgway reassured there was no evidence of their deaths, though there were suspicions about their welfare.[67] Gavan McCormack has suggested that Hanley's story was manufactured to "spread uncertainty" when the war seemed "virtually over and a political settlement . . . imminent."[68] Wilfred also thought the story was concocted to destabilise the prospect of a negotiated settlement.[69] Debate on the ceasefire line was inching towards resolution, and discussion was about to start on the exchange of prisoners-of-war. But the story did prod Wilfred into exploring conditions in communist controlled prison camps.

Wilfred had a sound professional relationship with the Associated Press' (AP) bureau chief in Tokyo, Bob Eunson. They had met during the Pacific War and renewed acquaintances in Korea, where Eunson occasionally passed books and film onto Wilfred from George.[70] An AP photographer, Frank 'Pappy' Noel, had been captured by the communists. Curious about the conditions in the communist camps, Eunson asked Wilfred if he could pass a camera onto Noel.[71] Wilfred, who was keen to refute

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[65] Letter from Wilfred George Burchett, 1 December 1951; BP SLV. See also *This Monstrous War*, p 221.
[66] Wilfeed Burchett, *This Monstrous War*, p 238; & the letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Peking, 18 December 1951; BP SLV
[67] See Gavan McCormack's *Cold War Hot War*, p 143-145; & James Aronson, *The Press and the Cold War*, p 117. As McCormack notes, the Hanley story was prominently reported by the Melbourne *Herald* on 15 November under the banner, "Red Atrocities Arouse USA."
[68] Gavan McCormack, *ibid*, p 143.
[69] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, pp 168-169.
[70] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, *op cit*; BP SLV. Wilfred had requested from George three copies of *China's Feet Unbound* and Kodak film. An uneasy Eunson ensured Wilfred received them.
[71] Wilfred Burchett, *This Monstrous War*, p 266; *Again Korea*, p 62; *Passport*, p 195; & *At the Barricades*, p 169.

Hanley's story, conveyed Eunson's request to the communist delegation. Eager to exploit its propaganda potential, the communists consented, and within days Wilfred had received photographs of Noel looking "fatter than he had ever been." Afterwards, the photos appeared in American newspapers.[72]

Meanwhile, at Panmunjom, both sides had commenced discussing the exchange of prisoners-of-war. Under Article 118 of the 1949 Geneva Convention, prisoners were to be released and repatriated without delay once hostilities had ceased. In other words, they were to be ferried back to their side of the front without any say. Whilst the communists supported this, UN negotiators advocated a less arbitrary alternative. On 10 August, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended that the repatriation of prisoners should be voluntary - a choice between democracy and dictatorship. In support, a forthright President Truman declared that America would "not buy an armistice by turning over human beings for slaughter or slavery."[73] Though high-minded in principle, voluntary repatriation also had an ignominious side. Joy was not unmindful of its "humanitarian considerations", but his and Washington's "major objective . . . was to inflict upon the Communists a propaganda defeat which might deter them from further aggression."[74] As he noted, there was a substantial dividend in "having a large number of former Commie soldiers refuse to return to their homeland and . . . the UNC (United Nations Command) provide them asylum."[75] When the issue was discussed at Panmunjom on 11 December, the American negotiators led by Rear Admiral R E Libby pressed for a voluntary exchange under the supervision of the International Red Cross (IRC). Libby proposed an initial one-for-one exchange, followed by further exchanges if the IRC was convinced the prisoners concerned wanted to be repatriated.[76]

On 18 December both sides submitted lists of prisoners-of-war. The communist list contained 11,559 prisoners, including approximately 3000 Americans. Libby immediately alleged that the communists had not accounted for an additional 50,000 UN prisoners.[77] In contrast, his list comprised 132,000 North Korean and Chinese prisoners, prompting protests from the communists that it was 44,259 prisoners short.[78] Libby retorted that those concerned had been incorrectly classified as South Korean prisoners-of-war and, with the IRC's assistance, had been recast as displaced civilians. This marked the start of incessant wrangling over the veracity of each other's figures and the means of exchange.

As the delegates traded taunts, Wilfred set about establishing the accuracy of the communist list. In a broadcast over Peking Radio on 21 December, he told of the appearance of General William

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[72] Wilfred Burchett, *This Monstrous War, ibid.*
[73] Cited by Robert Leckie, *Conflict: The History of the Korean War, 1950-1953*, p 329.
[74] Cited by McCormack, *op cit*, p 123.
[75] Admiral C Turner Joy, *op cit*, p 136.
[76] See Wilfred Burchett, *This Monstrous War*, pp 256 & 261.
[77] *Ibid.*
[78] See "Burchett comments on Allied discrepancies in US POW list", Peking Radio, 23 December 1951; NAA6119/XR1, item 13. See also Admiral C Turner Joy, *ibid*, p 157.

Dean's name on the list.[79] Dean had been a soldier of note: the onetime Military Governor of South Korea no less, and the Commander of the US Army's 24th Division, until its rout at Taejon in the early days of the war, during which he disappeared and was presumed dead by the Americans. When his name was registered in Peking, the Americans dismissively tagged the communist list a fake. Wilfred was granted permission to interview Dean, and so began the oddest friendship of the war. They met in a concrete hut in Sunan. The general, Wilfred recollected, was "sleek and trim [and] playing chess." They shared a bottle of gin while Wilfred told him of the latest from the front and talks, and of a newspaper article that had appeared on Dean's family. He gave Dean two books, "the only two in English that he could find at the Kaesong market", and offered to mail a letter to Dean's wife. Afterwards, the letter was passed onto Joy by Nam Il during the negotiations.[80] Dean remembered that after Wilfred left he was allowed to read books, and began to receive mail. They met only twice more. Nonetheless, Dean later remarked that "for nearly two years [Burchett] made my life livable by treating me as a human being."[81]

Following the publication of Noel's photographs and the Dean story, the UN Command's Information Officer, Colonel George P Welch, warned UN correspondents about "fraternisation and trafficking with the enemy." Without mentioning any names, Welch accused the correspondents of "excessive social consorting" with their communist colleagues. His warning angered many western correspondents who relied on information from Burchett and Winnington to pad their reports. *Time's* Dwight Martin, for example, thought Welch's warning "unfair", because of the US Army's "practice [of] withholding legitimate news from UN correspondents." Martin considered his communist colleagues "a better source of truce-talk news than the sparse briefings by the UN's own information officers."[82] Furthermore, as AP's Charles Barnard suggested, stories from communist newsmen often "turned out to be correct."[83] Welch's warning had little effect, and the matter was dropped. In the meantime a story with far-reaching consequences was breaking south of the battleline.

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The so-called Koje Island massacre would later be used to tarnish Burchett and Winnington's reputations. Situated 20 miles south-west of Pusan, it was dubbed "Beggars' Island" by the Americans, and was South Korea's most populous prison camp. Of its 170,000 internees, 135,000 were prisoners-of-war and the remainder civilians. Of the prisoners, 118,000 were North Koreans and the rest Chinese. They were divided into compounds, each housing 8,000 inmates, all hopelessly overcrowded

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[79] "Burchett points out discrepancies in American casualty figures", 22 December 1951, Peking Radio; NAA *op cit.*

[80] The letter was forwarded to the American delegation on 24 December. See Admiral C Turner Joy, *op cit*, p 157.

[81] Wilfred Burchett, *This Monstrous War*, p 266; *Passport*, pp 194 & 202-204; & *At the Barricades*, p 170. For Dean's account see *General Dean's Story*, p 189; & "'Mystery man' made captive's life happy", 26 February 1954.

[82] Cited in *Time*, 18 February 1952. An account of Burchett's interview with Dean was published in *Time* on 31 December 1951; *Time*, 18 February 1952 & *Passport*, p 195.

[83] Cited by Wilfred Burchett from an article in *Stars and Stripes*, 10 February 1952. See *Passport*, *ibid* & *At the Barricades*, p 171.

and inadequately policed.[84] In January 1952, Dwight Martin toured the camp, and found that "each compound seethe[d] with intrigue." Internal battles were common, as were beatings and murder. Some of the strife, he suggested, "c[ould] be traced to competition for homosexual favours", but most of it stemmed from the rivalry between communist and anti-communist prisoners. Martin claimed that 13,000 Chinese and 6,000 North Koreans had signed petitions "in blood" against returning to communism, while others had "tattooed themselves with anti-communist slogans." In September 1951, the inmates had rioted, and Martin was told that communist prisoners had cut out the tongue of a suspected "renegade", before "bit[ing] him to death." These "fanatical" types swaggered about, "sing[ing] Red songs with totalitarian gusto," and "exercise[d] a high degree of effective control over their comrades on the island." Martin maintained that the riot stemmed from anti-communist prisoners attempting to escape this "control", and express their desire to be voluntarily repatriated.[85]

On 18 February 1952, Koje's inmates rioted again. American troops had apparently entered Compound 62 to fetch civilian internees for interrogation and screening, to determine whether they wanted to be repatriated north or south of the battle-line. The troops were attacked with spikes and clubs as they tried to separate communists from non-communists. Heavy-handedly, the Americans retaliated, killing 75 prisoners and wounding another 139, at the cost of a solitary death.[86] At Panmunjom, each side invariably blamed the other, but the British Ambassador in Tokyo, Sir Esler Denning, was more circumspect. He considered "the episode . . . a disagreeable one", with the potential to "discredit" the UN. The prisoners, he added, were "unarmed except for primitive homemade weapons", suggesting that "the American officers . . . panicked boldly and employed much stronger force than was necessary."[87] The US Far Eastern Command quickly dispatched the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Eighth Army, Brigadier-General Francis T Dodd, to restore order.[88] But on 13 March, South Korean guards, "contrary to instructions", opened fire on bickering groups of communist and anti-communist prisoners. Twelve communists were killed and 26 wounded, prompting Van Fleet to suggest that "[t]here'd be no incident . . . if the communists would only behave."[89] His comment clearly sought to shift blame from the camp's administrators onto the communist prisoners.

James Plimsoll was an Australian diplomat and a member of the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK) delegation that inspected the camp on 21 March. The delegation found it excessively overcrowded and inadequately supervised. "Each compound virtually [ran] itself", with guards keeping to the camp's perimeters. Within the compounds, "a dominant group" of either communist or anti-communist prisoners "[had] apparently gained control", over whom camp authorities exercised "very little discipline." Dodd told the delegation that

[84] "Report from Mr Plimsoll (UNCURK) received from Australian House", entitled "The United Nations Prisoner-of-War Camps on Koje Island", 27 March 1952; FO 371/99638, K1553/10.
[85] *Time* 28 January 1952.
[86] Plimsoll's report, *op cit.*
[87] Secret memorandum from Sir Esler Denning, the British Embassy, Tokyo, to R H Scott, Foreign Office, London, 25 February 1952; *ibid.* K1553/1.
[88] *Time*, 3 March 1952.
[89] Plimsoll's report, *op cit.* Van Fleet's comment appeared in *Time*, 24 March 1952.

he had frequently withheld food and water from the prisoners to maintain order, and ominously warned that more disturbances were certain.[90] Afterwards, Plimsoll told the British legation in Pusan that the "situation on Koje [was] . . . out of control." The legation had also been confidentially informed that "it [was] not unknown for American guards to maltreat prisoners and even shoot an occasional one."[91] In London, meanwhile, an unnamed diplomat scribbled on the Koje file: "If one half of this should reach the ears of Parliament there'd be hell to pay."[92]

In late March, the Labour opposition member for Fulham East, Michael Stewart, raised Koje in the Commons. In response, the Churchill Government stonewalled, stating that Ridgway was looking into the matter and, therefore, comment at this juncture would be improper.[93] But Labour persisted, and the Foreign Office, seeking to circumvent "widespread criticism" on the matter, advised Sir Oliver Franks in Washington that the camp was again "attract[ing] attention" in the Commons. Franks was instructed to alert the US Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, "to the possibility of repercussions."[94] The British Government and Foreign Office were anxious to nip the story in the bud.

In early May Koje exploded again. *Time* reported that Dodd had been talking with prisoners at the gate to a communist compound, when he was grabbed by a "hard-core" bunch. In return for his release, the prisoners demanded an end to screening and voluntary repatriation, and a "guarantee" that their "human rights" would be protected. To the displeasure of the UNC Dodd's subordinate, Brigadier-General Charles F Colson issued a statement, "admit[ting] that there ha[d] been instances of bloodshed where prisoners-of-war ha[d] been killed and wounded by UN forces." Colson "assur[ed] . . . that in the future . . . [prisoners] c[ould] expect humane treatment." He also promised that on Dodd's "release . . . forcible screening" would cease. According to *Time*, Ridgway's replacement as Commander-in-Chief of the UN Forces, General Mark Clark, was "indignant" at Dodd for causing the crisis and Colson for exacerbating it.[95] Clark tersely demanded Dodd's release, which the prisoners belatedly met. He and Colson were then hurriedly whisked from Koje. On 5 May Clark announced that Colson's pledges to the prisoners, in being issued without authority, would not be honoured. According to Clark, "investigations" had uncovered that the incident "was carefully prepared to manufacture propaganda for the purpose of beclouding the whole prisoner-of-war issue at the negotiations."[96] Reports were filtering into the western press that substantial numbers of North Korean and Chinese prisoners had declared that they would resist returning to communism. Screening by UN

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[90] *Ibid.*
[91] Telegram marked "secret & guard" from Adams, Korea, to the Foreign Office, London, 24 March 1952; *ibid*, K1553/5.
[92] Unsigned handwritten note attached to the foot of Adams' telegram, *ibidt.*
[93] "Question of Michael Stewart, Labour of Fulham East, answered 31 March", *ibid*, K1553/9; & the "confidential" telegram from the Foreign Office, London, to the British Embassy, Washington, 26 March 1952, *ibid*, K1553/8.
[94] "Confidential" cable from the Foreign Office, London, to the British Embassy, Washington, 11 April 1952, *ibid*, K1553/6.
[95] *Time*, 19 May 1952.
[96] See *Time*, 19 May 1952. The statement by General Mark Clark is contained in the telegram from Sir Oliver Franks, British Embassy, Washington, to the Foreign Office, London, 16 May 1952, *ibid*, K1553/13.

authorities had allegedly revealed that 44,000 of 96,000 North Korean prisoners wanted to stay in the south, while 15,600 of 20,700 Chinese refused to return home. Once again the talks tottered. In Clark's opinion, the communists had deliberately orchestrated Dodd's seizure to "retrieve" the situation.[97]

The Foreign Office, however, privately blamed the Americans for mismanaging the crisis. As Stratten suggested, Koje had "successfully discredited the screening process . . . without any help from communist propaganda." The only recourse was "to restore order . . . as soon as possible."[98] To deflect criticism, Clark introduced international contingents into the camp, to display a "united and common purpose." But Franks in Washington advised that this was "token" and "purely political", intended to convey UN "unity."[99] In late May, Denning in Tokyo discussed the situation on Koje with Clark who, apparently, "described the conditions . . . as disgraceful and . . . was determined to get the situation under control." Though "[h]e did not want to kill anybody", Clark confided that he would do so if required.[100] In the meantime a "source" in the US Embassy had told the British in Pusan that "the story of . . . Dodd's seizure" was neither accurate nor conveyed the "true . . . state of affairs on the island." Dodd had not been grabbed at the compound's gate, as publicly stated, but in "no-man's land", the entrance of which was policed by UN troops. This indicated that "[t]he prisoners [were] in complete control of the compound and ha[d] been so for a week." The source added that Dodd was no more than a scapegoat, whose demise was being peddled to mask the failure of the UNC to administer the camp properly.[101] To rectify the situation, General Haydon L Boatner was sent to restore order.

'Bull' Boatner and Wilfred had passingly met in China during the 1940s, when the former had served on 'Vinegar' Joe Stilwell's staff. Boatner was a no-nonsense soldier, with a brawler's mean streak, who recommended that stubborn prisoners should be "slash[ed]", clobbered with "the butt of [a] rifle" or jolted with a "knee in the groin."[102] Despite this, Boatner was trying to soften his 'tough guy' image. Shortly after arriving on Koje, he had asked correspondents to describe him as "stern" rather than "tough." The British Legation later noted that "American papers . . . do not appear to be conforming to his wish."[103] In late May the US press reported that Boatner had appointed a former *Kuomintang* general" as his adviser on Koje. It was not a surprising revelation, as while on Stilwell's staff, Boatner had undoubtedly established substantial *Kuomintang* contacts. The State Department immediately assured the Foreign Office that the individual concerned was now a US Department of Army employee who, on Boatner's request, had briefly acted as an interpreter on Koje. The story had not been published in Britain. If it did surface, Stratten recommended that certain "background

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[97] Cited by *Time*, *ibid.* See also *Time*, 19 May & 26 May 1952.
[98] Minute by R J Stratten, 23 May 1952, *ibid*, K 1553/23.
[99] Secret cable form the British Embassy in Tokyo to the Ministry of Defence, London, 26 May 1952, *ibid*, K1553/21.
[100] "Confidential" cable from Sir Esler Denning, British Embassy, Tokyo, to the Foreign Office, Tokyo, 30 May 1952, *ibid*, K1553/32.
[101] "Confidential" cable from the British Legation in Pusan to the Foreign Office, London, 26 May 1952, *ibid*, K1553/36.
[102] Cited *Time*, 9 June 1952.
[103] "Confidential" cable from the British Legation, Pusan, *op cit.*

information" should be suppressed.[104] He was obviously mindful of the potential damage in publicising the presence of a former *Kuomintang* officer in close proximity to communist Chinese prisoners-of-war. It was another side of the story, one that should not be told, indicating that there was more to Koje than met the eye. In the meantime, Boatner had encircled the communist-controlled compounds with tanks, machine-guns and infantry.[105]

In late May the Foreign Office received more disturbing information about the situation on Koje. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had visited the camp, to ascertain the causes of the February riot, and found that it had started in a compound housing reclassified civilian internees who, on being screened, had initially asserted their allegiance to the South. Afterwards, however, "some of these men [had] expressed communist sympathies" and claimed that they wished, instead, to be repatriated to the North. One internee stated that he and others had opposed further screenings, because the "first . . . had been carried out under pressure." On 18 February, camp authorities had attempted another screening and, in retaliation, the internees rioted.[106] With Plimsoll's report, the ICRC's findings produced "serious misgivings" in the Foreign Office "on the fairness and accuracy" of screening. The report was especially disturbing, as Foreign Secretary Eden, on 7 May, had told the Commons of the Government's belief in "the validity of the screening process."[107] Later that month he met the US Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, in Paris, who admitted that Koje "had greatly weakened the moral position of the [UNC]." Without elaborating on the means, Acheson declared his intention to bolster it.[108]

In early June, skirmishes between communist prisoners and American infantrymen on Koje had left six of the latter dead.[109] Within weeks, Boatner attacked Compound 76 with tanks and flame-throwers. Stridently pro-communist, the compound had orchestrated Dodd's kidnapping. Forty-one of its inmates died in the attack and another 85 were wounded, while the Americans lost a solitary paratrooper. Boatner was publicly lauded for breaking the communists' control of the camp. *Time* called him "a soldier who could use his wits in the most disagreeable of situations." He had "cowed the unruly communist, and had done much to restore US prestige lost by previous pampering and bungling."[110] This was a heroic Boatner, scripted for mass consumption in the west. But there was another bullying Boatner on the other side of the Koje story.

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When Koje erupted, Wilfred was touring the communist-controlled prison camps on the Yalu River. He and Winnington never saw Koje. They were barred from the South, and so their Koje was

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[104] Minute by R J Stratten, *ibid*, K1553/18.
[105] See *Time*, 2 June 1952.
[106] Memorandum entitled "Conditions in Prisoner-of-War Camps Under the Control of the United Nations Command", *ibid*, K1553/29.
[107] *Ibid*.
[108] "Record of conversation with Mr Acheson at US Embassy Paris", 28 May 1952, *ibid*, K1553/38.
[109] *Time*, 9 June 1952.
[110] *Time*, 23 June 1952.

drafted from the stories they subsequently heard from escapees, returning prisoners and captured southern agents, and the reports of independent organisations like the ICRC. From them, Wilfred envisaged his Koje; and from its misery was born his idyll of prison life in the northern camps, where there was not "a single strand of barbed-wire" or a tank in sight. Instead, the camps were "like . . . holiday resort[s]." The prisoners, all heartily fed, spent their days fishing and swimming at a nearby lake, or playing games. Work was limited to camp maintenance chores only. "[N]o prisoners-of-war in modern history had been so well treated as th[ese]", Wilfred declared, which was even "more admirable . . . consider[ing] the savage cruelty" inflicted on their communist counterparts on Koje.[111]

Wilfred had followed the Koje story since it broke in early 1952. He and Winnington considered the truth had been lost in the "fine mesh of American censorship", which had "create[d] the impression that these events were . . . caused by 'fanatical' prisoners." This was not the 'real' story, they argued. On 1 November 1952, they noticed a newspaper report, which revealed that on 5 July 1951 - five days prior to the commencement of the talks - the US Army's Psychological Warfare Branch had recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Security Council (NSC) that the issue of prisoners-of-war "would inevitably become a factor in psychological warfare." According to Wilfred and Winnington, the prisoners were propaganda tools, and the issue of their repatriation was to be used as a "stumbling block to peace." Meanwhile, the public was to be duped into the believing that blame for the failure to resolve the issue resided with the communists.[112] With this in mind, the Americans had proposed voluntary repatriation.

Wilfred was a stickler for the Convention, because it "forbade any conditions being attached to [the prisoners'] release."[113] In contrast, voluntary repatriation housed a hidden agenda. As he explained to George, it seemed "harmless" enough, though in practice, prisoners could be "subject[ed] by both sides to incessant physical and mental coercion to change [their] political - and even national status."[114] This, to Wilfred and Winnington, was exactly what the Americans had in mind. In preparation, the pair alleged that the Psychological Warfare Branch had planted 100 *Kuomintang* "thugs" or instructors in Koje's communist compounds.[115] Their arrival coincided with a statement on 12 January 1952 by Libby that the prisoners were being educated in the "fundamental concepts of democracy."[116] A day later, the South Korean President, Syngman Rhee, announced that 5,231 North Korean prisoners-of-war had presented a petition in blood, insisting on remaining in the south. In the following months, Wilfred and Winnington noted with interest reports filtering from the south,

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[111] "Burchett describes life in POW Camp 5, 22 May 1952; "Wilfred Burchett's Broadcast on UN POW Camps in North Korea", 26 June 1952; & "Wilfred Burchett Writes on British POW'S", 25 June 1952, Radio Peking, *op cit*. See also *This Monstrous War*, pp 300-303.
[112] Wilfred Burchett & Alan Winnington, *Koje Unscreened*, p 65.
[113] Wilfred Burchett, *This Monstrous War*, p 261. See also Wilfred Burchett & Alan Winnington, *ibid* pp 32-33.
[114] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Kaesong 19 November 1952; BP SLV.
[115] Wilfred Burchett & AlanWinnington, *ibid*, p 15.
[116] *Ibid*, p 34 & Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 262-263.

suggesting that communist prisoners had tattooed themselves with anti-communist slogans, so great was their desire to embrace democracy.[117]

In October and November the Chinese and North Koreans began parading before the press alleged captured *Kuomintang* agents and escapees from Koje. Wilfred and Winnington heard the agents tell of the establishment of *Kuomintang* associations in each Koje compound. Membership was used as an inducement for privileges, whilst non-members were beaten or deprived of rations.[118] The agents offered prisoners passages to Formosa under the gaze of American officers. Prisoners who refused, were either slashed or killed.[119] Agents also admitted to tattooing anti-communist slogans on communist prisoners-of-war, to shame them from returning home. As the talks moved from the demarcation line onto the repatriation issue, the rate of tattooing increased. The escapees told similar tales of clubbings and starvation diets, and being forced to declare in blood their wish to remain in the South or be repatriated to Formosa. The Americans, they suggested, had orchestrated the blood petitions, under the veneer of voluntary repatriation.[120]

In *This Monstrous War* Wilfred stated that when the handling of UN prisoners-of-war was mentioned in the western press it was usually in terms of "'atrocities', while the treatment of Korean and Chinese prisoners on Koje Island [was] the highest expression of humanitarianism." The "facts", he argued, "[had been] so monstrously distorted" to mask massacre under the facade of humanitarianism.[121] On hearing news of the riots in February 1952, Wilfred wrote that voluntary repatriation was a distortion, coined to hide the forcible removal of communist prisoners to the south or Nationalist China.[122] Later, he and Winnington suggested that the riots were a reaction against this, carried on under a humanitarianism guise. From their investigations, they concluded "that every device of mental and physical pressure was brought to bear on the prisoners to renounce their rights." Thus, the prisoners had no alternative other than refusing *en masse* to be screened.[123] The kidnapping of Dodd, according to Wilfred, was an expression of their frustration, and it was to Clark's "shame and dishonour" that he reneged on Colson's deal and sent in Boatner.[124] It was "the sort of warfare that the demoralised, brutalised American troops and their depraved commanders glory in", he added.[125] The real heroes were the prisoners, the "'Gooks' and 'Chinks'" of the American side of the story.[126]

Unbeknown to Winnington and Wilfred, their misgivings about Koje faintly reverberated through the corridors of the Foreign Office, where diplomats grumbled about the screening process and

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[117] Wilfred Burchett & Alan Winnington, *ibid*, pp 34-36, & Wilfred Burchett, *ibid*, p 263.
[118] Wilfred Burchett & Alan Winnington, *ibid*, pp 16-18.
[119] *Ibid*, pp 57-58.
[120] *Ibid*, pp 27, 22 & 24.
[121] Wilfred Burchett, *This Monstrous War*, p 303.
[122] "Burchett comment on Koje Incident", Peking Radio, 24 & 26 February 1951; NAA6119/XR1, item 13..
[123] Wilfred Burchett & Alan Winnington, *op cit*, pp 61& 64.
[124] Wilfred Burchett. *This Monstrous War*, p 279. For a list of the prisoners' demands see p 278.
[125] *Ibid*, p 295.
[126] Wilfred Burchett & Alan Winnington, *op cit*, pp 4 & 21.

American heavy-handedness, and rumours of a *Kuomintang* presence in the camps. For both men, the story of Koje was about the right to return to one's homeland. In telling it, they had partially surrendered their rights to return to their respective homes, Britain and Australia. The germ warfare story, however, sealed their fates.

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Dr Joseph Needham was the Sir William Dunn Reader in biochemistry at Cambridge University. He was also a member of the British-China Friendship Association, the World Peace Council and the United Nations Association (UNA), and had been the Director of Natural Sciences at UNESCO. From 1942 until 1946 he had been the Scientific Counsellor at the British mission in Chungking. Perhaps during his early days in the city he met Wilfred. If so, they might have talked about the Japanese bacteriological attack on Changteh in early November 1941. It had been Wilfred's first report for the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, and the subject of a Needham memorandum to the British ambassador. Ten years later the spectre of Changteh returned to haunt both men in Korea.[127]

In early March 1951 the Chinese newsagency, *Hsinhua*, reported that American forces had used poison gas during attacks on the Han River front in late February.[128] The report was dismissed in the west. As one British diplomat noted, if the attacks had occurred "far more propaganda use would surely have been made of them."[129] Later that month, the Soviet newsagency, *Tass*, citing Chinese sources, suggested that MacArthur was considering deploying bacteriological weapons in Korea, utilising "the same criminal methods" that the Japanese had employed on the Chinese during the Second World War.[130] It proved a portentous remark for some, and a communist lie to others. But it was a remark with a weighty past.

On Christmas Day 1949 the Soviet War Crimes Tribunal convened in the Siberian city of Khabarovsk. A dozen members of the Japanese military's Epidemic Prevention Unit, more commonly dubbed Unit 731, stood in the dock accused of engaging in biological warfare during the Sino-Japanese and Second World Wars. Located in the north-eastern Chinese city of Harbin, the Unit had operated on an annual allocation of $US5 million, employed over 3000 biological warfare specialists, and exterminated 4000 prisoners-of-war in the course of its research.[131] But it had developed a potent bacteriological warfare capability, including an aerial spray and a ceramic canister bomb, capable of deploying anthrax and other disease infected feathers and insects.[132] The bomb had been named after the Unit's commanding officer, Lieutenant-General Shiro Ishii. He and his colleagues, Massaji Kitano

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[127] Wilfred G Burchett, "Germ Warfare by Japanese", the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, 26 November 1941; & Joseph Needham's "Memorandum by a British Bacteriologist", 25 March 1942, Folder 68, Needham Papers IWM.
[128] See the "confidential" cipher from Lionel Lamb, British Embassy, Peking, to the Foreign Office, London, 22 March 1951; FO371/92832, K11911/1.
[129] Foreign Office minute by R J Stratten, 4 April 1951, *ibid.*
[130] The *Tass* report was incorporated in a 'confidential' cypher from the British Embassy in Moscow to the Foreign Office in London, 24 March 1951; *ibid*, K11911/3.
[131] Gavan McCormack, *Hot War, Cold War*, pp 150-151.
[132] John Cookson and Judith Nottingham, *A Survey of Biological Warfare*, p 56.

and Yujiro Wakamatsu, were not at Khabarovsk. The prosecuting counsellor, L N Smirnov, informed the Tribunal that the trio "enjoy[ed] the protection of those reactionary forces in the Imperialist camp."[133] Shortly before Soviet troops had liberated Harbin, Ishii had fled to Tokyo. Thereafter he resided, curiously untroubled by the proceedings of the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal. In October 1947, the Pentagon approached Ishii and 19 other Japanese bacteriological warfare experts for information in exchange for immunity from prosecution. The US military considered that the "potential benefits of the [Japanese] research . . . far out-weighed the demands of justice."[134] Fortunately for Ishii, the Americans had realised the cost-effective potency of bacteriological warfare. In mid-1946, the Chief of the Army's Chemical Warfare Bureau, General Alden, had marvelled about its "practical" uses and "great potentialities."[135] His sentiments were endorsed by the Chair of the Bureau's Biological Warfare Committee, George W Merck, who gloated that the prospect for "real" germ warfare had moved from the laboratory onto the battlefield.[136] Of course, the Americans masked their deal with the Japanese. When it was mentioned at Khabarovsk, the Americans promptly ridiculed it as communist propaganda.[137] When, in early May 1951, the North Korean Foreign Minister, Pak Hun Yong, again accused the Americans of bacteriological raids, a British Foreign Office diplomat suggested that the lie, which had been seeded at Khabarovsk, was now flowering in Korea.[138]

But the allegations persisted. On 22 February 1952, Pak again accused the US Airforce of conducting widespread germ warfare attacks over North Korea between 18 January and 17 February.[139] The accusation might have passed unnoticed, if not for the claim of the Chinese Premier, Chou En-lai, that the Americans were employing the expertise of "Shiro Ishii. . . [and] other Japanese bacteriologists."[140] The British Ambassador in Peking, Lionel Lamb, was not an admirer of Chou, nor any other Chinese communist for that matter. When the claims were initially made, Lamb airily told

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[133] Cited in Peter Williams & David Wallace's *Unit 731: The Japanese Army's Secret of Secrets*, p 222.
[134] Cited by Robert Harris and Jeremy Paxton, *A Higher Form of Killing: America's Secret Story of Chemical and Biological Warfare*, pp 153-154. See also Sheldon H Harris' *Factories of Death: Japanese Biological Warfare 1932-45 and the American Cover-up*, pp 208 & 221-222 for a counter view.
[135] *Ibid*, Harris and Paxton, pp 154-55.
[136] George W Merck, "Peacetime implications of biological warfare", *Chemical & Engineering News*, No 24, 1946, folder 74; Needham Papers IWM.
[137] See Gavan McCormack, *op cit*. Also see the margin note on the report from the BBC Monitoring Service, which dismisses the trial as "unscrupulous propaganda." *Op cit*.
[138] See the report of the BBC Monitoring Service to the Far Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, 8 May 1951& the Foreign Office minute dated 25 May 1951; *ibid*, K11911/5
[139] See Jaap van Ginneken, "Bacteriological Warfare", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol 7, no 2, 1977, pp 130-152. Ginneken was granted access to North Korean documents in the early 1980s. He found that at the time of the attacks, North Korean authorities had documented a biological raid on the village of Bal Nam Ri in the Anju region. The village had a population of 600, of whom 45 had contracted bubonic plague. The outbreak was peculiar, because the outbreak occurred in mid-winter, and plague had been eradicated in the North. Thirty-five finally died of the illness. Subsequent investigations found that human and not rat fleas were the source of the disease. Outbreaks of plague and cholera were also documented in other parts of the North. A copy of the van Ginneken's article is amongst Needham's papers at the Imperial War Museum, London.
[140] "Statement of Chou En-lai on the use of Bacteriological Warfare in Korea", 24 February 1952; FO *op cit*, K1095/7.

London that they were "typical of the distorting minds behind China's propaganda machine."[141] He considered this most recent round "inconceivable . . . not only on the grounds of morality and humanitarian principles, but also in view of [the Americans'] earnest desire for the conclusion of the Armistice."[142] Lamb had served on the Far Eastern Sub-committee of the Allied War Crimes Commission after the Second World War, and could not recollect any "formal charges" being laid at that time against the Japanese for bacteriological warfare, though a member of his staff vaguely recalled that their medical units had conducted "intense research in[to] plague prevention." The allegations were simply preposterous. As one of Lamb's London colleagues suggested, they were probably intended "to cover epidemics which [might] be out of control" behind the communist lines. Yet, he cautiously added, he "[could not] recall . . . where a theme ha[d] been plugged so hard."[143]

Lamb was particularly concerned about the galvanising effect of Chou's statement on his fellow Asians. In late February Lamb sought the views of representatives from the Burmese and Indonesian missions, and the Indian ambassador, N K Pannikar, and was disturbed to find that the lattermost was "inclined to credit the allegations to some extent."[144] Pannikar considered Chou a man of "integrity" who "genuinely believe[d] the accusations." Lamb lamented to London: "I cannot share the Indian Ambassador's view." On the contrary, he added, Chou's statement was "more than likely . . . activated by a dishonourable motive."[145] To counter its effect, Lamb urged that a "formal communication in denial" should be hastily issued by the Americans."[146] Shortly afterwards, the Foreign Office warned Sir Oliver Franks in Washington that "these rumours, if they gain currency, will damage UN stakes and . . . prestige, and alienate sympathy."[147] On 4 March, Dean Acheson strenuously denied the allegations and recommended that the IRC should be approached to investigate them.[148] But as Lamb knew, Acheson's suggestion was doomed, because "[t]he Chinese would . . . deny the impartiality of such a body." Lamb was undoubtedly mindful the IRC had previously rejected a request from a group of neutral nations to investigate alleged atrocities committed against communist prisoners-of-war.[149] As a result, the Chinese and North Koreans questioned the IRC's impartiality, and so sought bodies more to their liking.

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[141] Cipher from Lamb at the British Embassy in Peking to the Foreign Office, London, 9 May 1951, *ibid*, K1191/9.
[142] Memorandum from Lamb at the British Embassy in Peking to the Foreign Office in London, 28 February 1952; *ibid*, K1095/2.
[143] Internal minute by J M Addis, 3 March 1952; *ibid*, K1095/3.
[144] See the "Confidential" memorandum from Lamb, the British Embassy, Peking, to the Foreign Office, London, 28 February 1952; & the Memorandum from Lamb, the British Embassy, Peking, to the Foreign Office, London, 1 March 1952; *ibid*, K1095/3.
[145] "Confidential" memorandum from Lamb, the British Embassy, Peking, to the Foreign Office, London 10 March 1952; *ibid*, K1095/10.
[146] Memorandum from Lamb, the British Embassy, Peking, to the Foreign Office, London, 1 March 1952; *ibid*, K1095/2.
[147] Confidential memorandum from the Foreign Office in London to the British Embassy in Washungton, 3 March 1952; *ibid*, K1095/3.
[148] For the text of Acheson's statement see the cipher from the Foreign Office in London to the British Embassy in Peking, 5 March 1952; K1095/4.
[149] See van Genneken, *op cit*, p 140; & McCormack, *op cit*, p 147.

On 1 March the Commission of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (CIADL) had arrived in Peking. It comprised distinguished, leftist-leaning lawyers, judges and legal academics from Italy, France, Britain, Belgium, Communist China and Brazil, under the chairmanship of the Austrian Professor of International Law at the University of Graz, Heinrich Brandweiner.[150] For three weeks CIADL inspected alleged sites of germ warfare raids in north-eastern China and North Korea. From Pyongyang it reported the appearance of "flies and insects of a character hitherto unknown in Korea." They had been found in 167 locations, and were contaminated with plague, typhus and cholera, amongst other diseases. Similar occurrences were also noted over the border around Mukden. Locals testified that the insects' appearance usually coincided with sweeps by American planes.[151] CIADL overwhelmingly concluded that the North Koreans and Chinese had been subjected to widespread bacteriological attacks.[152]

While CIADL's investigation was in progress, Franks had received a US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) report, warning that the communists were after scapegoats to mask their own crimes and hygienic inadequacies. The report alleged that it was "entirely within the capability and mentality of communists to distribute evidence of planted virus where it [might] be found, or even to assist in [its] discovery." In addition, the report cautioned "that the communists . . . will probably take measures to create the evidence which does not and would not otherwise exist."[153] Franks sent the report to the Foreign Office, which was still smarting from Chou's propaganda coup. It felt that the British and Americans needed to "establish before world opinion our own humanitarian concern over this situation", whilst denigrating the "Communists' determination to exploit for propaganda purposes the widespread suffering for which they alone are responsible." Offers of medical assistance and an impartial investigation could be exploited to show that the Americans and British were honest brokers. It was also necessary to emphasise "the completely bogus character of the investigations which the Chinese Communists appear to have in hand", while making mileage from their rejection of the IRC investigation.[154] Invariably, CIADL's findings, and those of subsequent communist-orchestrated investigations, would be dismissed as propaganda and the reputations of those involved, attacked.

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[150] The members of the Commission were Luigi Cavalieri, an advocate at Supreme Court in Rome; the London solicitor, Jack Gaster; an advocate at the Paris Court of Appeal, Marc Jacquier, the Director of the Research Department of the People's Institute of Foreign Affairs in Peking, Ko Po-nien; the Brussels advocate, Marie-Louise Moerens; a Judge of the Warsaw Supreme Court, Zoflin Wasilkowska; and Letlba Rodrigues, an advocate from Rio de Janerio. See the *Commission of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers - Report on Investigation in Korea and China*, p 15; folder 9; Needham Papers IWM.

[151] See "Looking into the International Commission of Democratic Lawyers who visited North Korea and North East China from 3 March to 31 March", *Science and Peace*, folder 13; Needham Papers IWM.

[152] See the "*Report*" of the Commission of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, p 14, *op cit.*

[153] The text of the CIA report is attached to the 'secret' memorandum from Sir Oswald Franks, the British Ambassador in Washington, to the British Foreign Office, London, 14 March 1952; *ibid*, K1095/20.

[154] 'Confidential outward telegram from the Commonwealth Relations Office to the UK High Commission in Delhi, 14 March 1952; *ibid*, K1095/21B.

On 29 March Dr Kuo Mon-jo and his Korean counterpart, Liki-jen, presented a provisional report on the germ warfare raids to the WPC in Oslo. Deeply disturbed by the report, the WPC decided to establish an "International Commission" to investigate the allegations. It would consist of "men and women outstanding in the fields of science[,] . . . law and . . . religion", whose "competence and impartiality . . . [were] beyond disrepute."[155] Though prominent in the peace movement and a scientist of note, Needham had not intended to join. He was privately sceptical of the allegations, though he had no doubt they deserved attention.[156] He told a London protest meeting, they were "firm statements . . . published under the names of first-rate Chinese bacteriologists - men I personally know."[157] He considered that the claims, if proven, were a "complete and wicked . . . prostitution of [the] fight against infectious disease." They were also implicitly racist, equating Asians with "experimental animals." He understood that the Commission was to comprise "bacteriologists, epidemiologists and medical entomologists", all professionally eminent and politically unbiased, and more qualified to investigate the claims than a biochemist."[158] With little thought of participating, other than in a cursory manner, he left Cambridge for Peking in June on invitation from the Chinese National Academy of Science. On arrival, however, Needham did join the Commission and met Wilfred.

By the time of the Commission's arrival, Wilfred was a committed believer in the story. He remembered a confidential report by the *Kuomintang* Government on the 1941 Japanese attacks, which had circulated amongst Chungking's western embassies.[159] He had read the official report of the Khabarovsk tribunal, and knew of the Americans' deal with Ishii. Furthermore, he had recently noticed a Reuter's report, alleging that Ishii had secretly visited South Korea in late 1951.[160] On broaching the matter with communist officials, he was informed of eight raids over North Korea between 28 January and 17 February 1952. He had also interviewed witnesses to an attack on the Eastern Front in late February, and from their descriptions wrote that a variant of the Ishii bomb had been used.[161] He had told the editor of the Sydney *Tribune*, Alec Robertson, of another attack, weeks before, which had

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[155] *Report of the International Scientific Commission for the Investigation of the Facts Concerning Bacteriological Warfare in Korea and China*, p 2: and "Appeal of the World Peace Council", Oslo, Norway, 1 April 1952; folder 1, Needham Papers IWM.

[156] Needham stated his initial scepticism in a letter from S W Green, Secretary, Cambridge Peace Front, to Dr Needham, 25 July 1952; folder 42, Needham Papers, IWM.

[157] Article from the London *Daily Worker* dated April 1952; folder 4, Needham Papers IWM.

[158] Dr Joseph Needham, "Note on alleged bacteriological warfare in Korea", 27 April 1952, folder 4, Needham Papers IWM.

[159] Wilfred Burchett, *This Monstrous War*, p 306.

[160] See *This Monstrous War*, pp 306-307 and the report from the BBC Monitoring Service to the Far Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, London, 4 May 1951, FO K11911/4. See also *Newsweek*, "Bubonic plague ship", 19 April 1954. The article claimed that communist prisoners were taken on board the ship and "tested for symptoms of the dreaded bubonic plague." See Jaap van Ginneken *op cit.* The North Koreans suspected that Ishii, Wakamatsui and Kitano had been taken to Korea on the orders of the UN Commander-in-Chief, Ridgway. The information had come from the communist newsagency, *Telepress*, and had been originally leaked by two US officials in Rangoon. Needham was also advised that Ishii had visited Korea in November 1951. See the handwritten note in folder 70 of the Needham Papers IWM.

[161] "Burchett says germ warfare part of US campaign to enlarge Korean War", Peking Radio, 28 February 1952, NAA6119/XR1, item 13. Wilfred Burchett, "Eyewitness Report on US Germ Warfare in Korea", Queensland *Guardian*, 13 March 1952.

forced the evacuation of surrounding villages.[162] And he had confided to George that the raids, though experimental, often were carried out in the vicinity of the conference site.[163]

On 11 March, Wilfred was in Kaesong covering the talks, when a message arrived of abnormal clusters of insects in the nearby village of Chuk Dong. The next day he and his colleagues from the communist press visited the village, and found amongst the snow the smouldering remains of insects. Chinese soldiers and Korean school-children said that the insects' appearance coincided with the disappearance of an American plane behind a nearby hill.[164] The attack prompted Wilfred, Winnington, the Hungarian journalist, Tibor Meray, his Polish colleague, Lucien Pracki, and their North Korean and Chinese counterparts, to issue a joint declaration condemning the attacks. The evidence, they stated, was "indisputable . . . completely damning and final."[165]

Captured American soldiers and airmen, too, had begun to confess of their parts in the raids. In February an infantryman, Pte Marvin Lester Brown, alleged that American soldiers had scattered germ-ladened canisters during their southward retreat in early 1951. But his story was swamped by subsequent, more damning accounts.[166] On 5 May Radio Peking and the National China News Agency reported that two American airmen, lieutenants Kenneth L Enoch and John Quinn, had confessed to participating in germ warfare missions over the North Korean cities of Pyongyang, Sariwon and Hwangju in early January. Both had told of numerous military briefings on the subject at bases in the US, Japan and Korea, and of their missions and captures. Furthermore, both were contrite, apologising to the people of North Korea and China, and thanking them for the opportunity to confess, whilst damning "those imperialists of Wall Street" for forcing them to participate in such "inhuman" acts. Both men had surrendered to the communists the moral high ground.[167]

In early April a group of Chinese and North Korean scientists and correspondents gathered in a prison camp on the Yalu River to question Enoch and Quinn. The group had been convened by the Korean National Peace Council and Chinese Peace Committee, and was headed by the epidemiologist, Kin Bui Bun, assisted by the *Hsinhua* correspondent, Frung Shih. The group proposed to establish the "facts" about the raids, "and smash the various lies" propagated by the Americans. In other words, it intended to parade the guilt of the airmen and their government under the banner of science. Wilfred

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[162] "Extract from a letter from Wilfred Burchett - 29/2/52." The letter, addressed to "Alexander Robertson", was dated 1 April 1952, and signed "Kath." It was intercepted and opened by ASIO. NAA6119/XR, item 12, folio 193.
[163] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Kaesong, 18 February 1952; BP SLV.
[164] See *This Monstrous War*, p 309; & *Passport*, pp 217-219.
[165] Kim Chong Yun, Chu Chi-ping, Alan Winnington, Wilfred Burchett, Tibor Merai, "Declaration of Bacteriological Warfare by the Journalists covering the Armistice Talks in Korea - Kaesong, 28 March", *Documentation on Bacteriological Warfare*, Bulletin 6, 15 April 1952, published by the Secretariat of the World Peace Council, Prague; folder 23, Needham Papers IWM.
[166] For details see van Genneken, *op cit*.
[167] See *Documentation on Bacteriological Warfare*, Bulletin 15, 15 May 1952 & Bulletin 16, 20 May 1952, *op cit*, Needham Papers, folders 41 & 42. Enoch told of flying six germ warfare drops over North Korea between 7 and 11 of January, before being shot down and captured two days later. Quinn engaged in numerous missions from 3 to 10 January, when he too was shot down and captured.

had been invited to join the group, which was not entirely unexpected given his standing in the peace movement, and his abhorrence of technologically and scientifically based warfare. Over a seven-day stretch in early May, he sat through six interrogation sessions of the airmen who again confessed to their crimes and repeated their apologies. From the airmen's evidence, the group reported - with admirable specificity - that the US Airforce, had "dropped all kinds of poisonous objects on 804 occasions . . . over North Korea and North-East China" from 28 January until 31 March. The evidence was "ironclad" and "thoroughly dispose[d] of all these shameless arguments of the American aggressors."[168]

Prior to the hearings, Wilfred had requested separate interviews with both airmen and without the presence of communist guards or other inquisitors. His request had been granted, and during their respective sessions with Wilfred, both airmen drafted statements reiterating their stories. Wilfred later remembered that Enoch was less forthcoming than Quinn who "spoke eloquently and freely." According to Wilfred, the airmen agreed to participate in recorded interviews, during which he would "put questions based on [their] written statements."[169] On 30 May his interview with a somewhat distant Quinn was broadcast over Peking Radio.[170] Four days later, Wilfred and Radio Peking's listeners found Enoch in more expansive form. He and Wilfred seemed at ease with each other, as the airman related his story with minimal prompting.[171] The interviews strengthened Wilfred's already firm conviction in the veracity of the claims, and he considered the raids were no longer experimental, but an integral part of US Airforce strategy. On 8 June he reported over Peking Radio that American aircraft were "being outfought" by the Chinese Airforce's Soviet-built MIGs. As a consequence, the Americans had resorted to germ warfare to restore the military balance.[172]

By mid-June, more American airmen had confessed including lieutenants Floyd B O'Neal, and Paul R Kniss. Allegedly, Kniss had been shot down during a mission searching for Van Fleet's missing son on 31 May. Wilfred interviewed Kniss shortly afterwards, noting that he was "pleasant [and] clean-faced", and "perfectly at ease with his captors." Kniss initially told of his discontent with the circumstances of his capture before deviating, to Wilfred's surprise, onto germ warfare. According to Wilfred, Kniss "gave a vast amount of factual information which tied in with everything already known." Afterwards, an obvious rapport developed between them, doubtlessly fostered by their poor rural backgrounds.[173] That winter Wilfred wrote to Kniss, inquiring of his welfare, and suggesting he use his time profitably. Wilfred explained that "under normal conditions neither you nor I, nor any of

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[168] "Report by Korean and Chinese Specialists and Correspondents on the Interrogations of two Captured US Airmen", *Documentation on Bacteriological Warfare*, Bulletin 17, 22 May 1952, *op cit.*
[169] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 255.
[170] "Burchett interviews Quinn", Peking Radio, 30 May 1952; *op cit.* Burchett later acted as an interpreter for the President of the French National Peace Council and World Peace Council executive member, Yves Farge, and his academic colleague, Claude Roy, during their questioning of Quinn in June. See "Quinn tells Farge why he exposed US Germ Warfare", *People's China*, 1 July 1952, folder 16, Needham Papers IWM.
[171] "Burchett interviews Enoch", Peking Radio, 3 June 1952; NAA6119/XR1, *op cit.*
[172] "Burchett report on interviews with captured US pilots", Peking Radio, 8 June 1952; *ibid.*.
[173] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 226; & *This Monstrous War*, p 313.

the other POW's could have the luxury of doing nothing but reading and studying."[174] They now not only shared a past, but also a present. Perhaps Wilfred was becoming aware that he too was a prisoner in Korea, barred from returning to his homeland.

In late June the World Peace's Council's International Scientific Commission (ISC) arrived in Peking. It was impressively credentialled. Besides Needham, there was the Professor of Bacteriology and chief medical adviser at the Khabarovsk hearing, Dr Nicolai Zhukov-Verezhnikov; the Professor of Human Anatomy at the University of Bologna, Dr Oliveiro Olivo; the Professor of Parasitology at the University of Sao Paulo, Dr Samuel Pessoa; the Director of the Central Clinical Laboratory of the Hospitals Board of Stockholm, Dr Andrea Andreen; the Director of Animal Physiology at the National College of Agriculture, Grignon, Dr Jean Malterre; and Dr Franco Graziani, a microbiologist at the University of Rome.[175] On their arrival, they would have heard that the Americans had accused the Soviets of maliciously orchestrating the whole affair, and had placed before the UN Security Council a resolution charging the Chinese and North Koreans with making false accusations, whilst condemning their refusal to allow an IRC investigation. The resolution was later vetoed by the Soviets.[176] Meanwhile, the ISC went to work. They inspected remnants of the 1941 Changteh raid, and were briefed by Zhukov-Verezhnikov on the proceedings at Khabarovsk. They also examined insect specimens from the recent raids, noticing that they were ecologically and geographically displaced.[177]

On the evening of 26 June Wilfred and Needham met in Peking. Wilfred had just returned from touring the communist administered prisoner-of-war camps on the Yalu River, and told Needham of a curious occurrence near the village of Pi-tung. On the afternoon of 6 June, Wilfred had been sitting in his 'jeep', waiting to be ferried across the Yalu, when a bomb alert sounded. After the planes had passed and he had boarded the ferry, he spotted a broad "patch of insects . . . 200 yards by 50 yards" wriggling on the water. As the ferry approached, the insects "swarm[ed] up through the bolt holes", and the ferryman quickly bottled some samples. Later, after Wilfred had arrived at the camps, he was informed about other nearby discoveries of insect clusters, which too "had been accompanied by the passage of American planes." Near Camp Two he interviewed a group of school-children who said that the insects had been deposited in "shining globes." At Camp Three Wilfred heard from prison guards that American prisoners-of-war had "reluctantly" assisted in the destruction of the insects, doubting they were dangerous. To prove the point, a black American, Charles Pixley, had swallowed one. Wilfred told Needham that Pixley "went down like an felled ox." His temperature rose, and he was racked by "muscle and joint pains." Wilfred departed soon after, and so was unable to follow Pixley's illness, though he "thought that if the negro had died, he would have heard."[178]

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[174] Letter from Wilfred Burchett to Paul Kniss, Kaesong, 30 November 1952; NAA6119/XR1, item 13, folio 234.
[175] See Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 229; & Peter Williams and David Wallace, *op cit*, p 240.
[176] "Germ Warfare in Korea", *Current History*, September 1952; NAA6119/XR1, item 13, folios 22A-22G.
[177] Peter Williams and David Wallace, *ibid*, pp 240-241.
[178] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, pp 221-223; *This Monstrous War*, pp 310-312; & "Notes on the incident of 6th June at Pi-tung - near Camp 5 headquarters", 28 June 1952, folder 31, Needham Papers IWM.

During the following weeks Needham and his colleagues travelled to Mukden and onto North Korea, inspecting the alleged sites of raids and talking with numerous health officials. At Mukden, Zhukov-Verezhnikov performed an autopsy on a guinea pig supposedly dropped by the Americans, and noted that it was infected with plague *bacilli*. Outside Pyongyang, the Commission heard of the recent sudden appearance of cholera infected clams, which locals suspected were intended to contaminate the North's reservoirs. Needham also renewed acquaintances with Dr Wen-kwei Chen, a colleague from his days in Chungking. Chen was now the President of South-West Branch of the Chinese Medical Association, and had been seconded to Pyongyang to assist in epidemic control. He was in no doubt that the Americans were employing similar techniques to those used by the Japanese in 1941.[179] The Commission also heard again from Wilfred. Pixley had apparently contracted malaria-like symptoms, though his doctors doubted it was as it seemed. Wilfred later wrote that laboratory tests confirmed that the insects involved in the attack near Pixley's camp were contaminated with anthrax.[180]

In early August the ISC travelled to a prison camp on the Yalu River and interviewed Quinn, Enoch, O'Neal and Kniss. Once again they contritely told their stories. However, the words seemed not entirely their own, but those of their captors, inserted to parade their and the Commission's moral superiority over the Americans. During his testimony, Quinn declared, "because a person calls himself an American it does not mean that he is necessarily good." Before leaving the stand, he thanked the Commission for "tak[ing] the responsibility on your shoulders that I should have taken on mine." Needham noted that the airman was "rather poetic and emotional", and "wouldn't do very well in business." O'Neal was more to Needham's liking. Scientifically minded, the airman assured that he appeared "of [his] own free will", and intended "to tell the truth." So too did Enoch who commended the Commission for their "just and noble fight", before renouncing his service to those "madmen who [were] throwing down this terrible challenge to the peace-loving people of the world." Needham scribbled that Enoch had remained "unemotional" throughout. So too did Kniss. He seemed again at ease with his captors as he accused the US Government of intervening in Korea "to grab" rather than "save . . . the world." It was another treasonous tract, not simply an admission of guilt nor an expression of regret, but an admonishment of his government's evil, and an appeal to the American people to stop this insidious type of warfare. They were words uttered as weapons, which of course does not make them false.[181] As Wilfred's own journalism suggests, even the most robust forms of advocacy can be rooted in facts, though they might be sometimes missed amidst the rhetorical jousts. Wilfred was "convinced that the [airmen's] statements . . . [were] accurate and . . . made of their own

[179] See Peter Williams and David Wallace, *op cit*, pp 245, 248 & 249-250.
[180] Needham's handwritten note dated 6 August, Needham Papers, folder 32; & *Passport*, pp 232-233.
[181] "Interrogation of Lt. John Quinn by International Scientific Commission", *New China News Agency*, Supplement 102, 1 October 1952, Needham Papers, folder 43; "Interrogation of Lt. Floyd B O'Neal, by the International Scientific Commission", *ibid*, Supplement 103, 2 October 1952, *ibid*; Interrogation of Lt Kenneth Enoch by the Scientific Commission", *ibid*, Supplement 104, 3 October 1952, *ibid*, folder 44; & "Interrogation of Lt Paul R Kniss by the International Scientific Commission", *ibid*, Supplement 101, 21 September 1952; *op cit*. For Needham's comments on each of the airmen see his handwritten notes of the hearing. Folder 41, Needham Papers IWM.

free will."[182] Nonetheless, the ISC's hearing, rather than substantiating the truth of the allegations, sought instead to parade the moral and ideological superiority of communism over American capitalism. Not surprisingly, the proceedings were dismissed in the west. It ensured that the Commission's overall report would not be seriously considered other than by peace camp followers.

S W Green was a member of the Cambridge Peace Front. He was also sceptical of the germ warfare story. Unlike most of his colleagues, Green had totally dismissed CIADL's conclusions. It had not been scientifically based, nor "in Korea . . . long enough to examine one atrocity properly", let alone the truth about germ warfare. In late July Green wrote to Needham expressing his reservation. Of particular concern to Green was the evidence of the American airmen. As he stressed to Needham, unless the Commission establishes that they spoke freely, "one must conclude that their allegations are lies, invented to stir up hatred against the Americans."[183] His letter reached Needham in early August, as the Commission arrived in Peking to write their report.

It was released at a Peking press conference on 31 August and had, to all appearances, addressed Green's concerns. The commissioners were convinced that the testimonies of the American airmen were true, and given freely without "physical or mental" pressure. Blinkered by romantic notions of Chinese purity, the commissioners saw no reason to doubt the airmen's "integrity" or the "the veracity" of their stories. In testifying, the airmen had been swayed by "the friendliness and kindness of . . .[their] captors" who had convinced them that "their duty to all races and peoples . . . outweigh[ed] their actual scruples at revealing what might be considered the military secret of their government."[184] But the testimonies merely "complemented" the Commission's scientific findings. The commissioners sstated from the outset that they "ha[d] carried out their investigation according to the strictest scientific principles known to them."[185] From the evidence they had gathered in the field, they claimed that since early 1952 isolated cases of plague, and haemorrhagic and respiratory anthrax, had occurred in North Korea and neighbouring China.[186] The outbreaks had usually coincided with "the sudden appearance of a number of fleas, and . . . the previous passage of American planes." The commissioners deducted that the US Airforce was responsible, and that it had used techniques "similar to, if not identical, with those employed . . . by the Japanese during the Second World War."[187] On this basis alone, the Commission concluded that there was substantial scientific evidence to suggest that bacteriological weapons "[had] been employed by units of the USA armed forces."[188]

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[182] Wilfred Burchett, *This Monstrous War*, p 313.
[183] Letter from S W Green, Secretary, Cambridge Peace Front, to Dr Needham, 25 July 1952; folder 42, Needham Papers.
[184] *Report of the International Scientific Commission for the Investigation of the Facts Concerning Bacterial Warfare in Korea and China Ibid*, p 48.
[185] *Ibid*, p 1.
[186] *Ibid*, pp 32-35.
[187] *Ibid*, p 12 & 24.
[188] *Ibid*, pp 60 & p 49-50. Wilfred's incident at Pi-tung appeared in the appendix of the Commission's report, though without comment or subsequent review of Pixley's condition, but obviously in support of the Commission's findings.

Needham returned to Britain in September. Perhaps as he left Peking he pondered the fate of Brandweiner who, on returning to Austria, was charged with treason and suspended from his university post.[189] He might also have thought about the Reverend Jim Endicott, the chairman of the Canadian Peace Congress. On invitation from the Chinese Committee for World Peace, Endicott too had investigated the claims and declared over Peking Radio that they were indeed justified. On his return to Canada his passport was impounded, the press called for his head, and the Canadian Government trotted out entomologists to rebut his claims and tarnish his reputation.[190]

On 26 September Needham confronted the press at the Royal Hotel in London's Upper Holburn Place. He boldly stated: "I consider that we have what amounts to 97% proof of our case." He was asked if Burchett had concocted Kniss' testimony before the Commission. Needham emphatically declared that "[he] personally kn[ew] Mr Burchett, and . . . [did not] believe that his imagination could run to that." Amidst howls from the floor, a doubter yelled, "you don't know many journalists."[191]

In the following months, Needham's membership of the UNA came under scrutiny, and he was attacked in the press and by the Tories in the Commons. In an attempt to tell his side of the story, Needham wrote to a sympathetic left-wing Labour backbencher, S O Davies. Davies had repeatedly, though unsuccessfully, prodded the Churchill Government about the germ warfare raids. However, as he tellingly told Needham, with regards to the Korean War, "there has existed in the Commons a conspiracy to suppress the truth . . . in a most reckless way."[192]

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On 27 July 1953 an armistice was signed ending the Korean War. For Wilfred and Winnington, it marked a moral and military victory for the communists. No longer, the pair declared, would "a western power with a few gun boats . . . dominate an Asian people." Asian resourcefulness had out-witted American technology and, more significantly, people's democracy had triumphed over imperialism.[193] The West, too, claimed victory, trumpeting communism had been contained. But both sides' assertions were hollow. Though the carnage had stopped, the Korean peninsula was cut along the 38th Parallel, ushering in a colder war.

The prisoner-of-war issue, however, remained unresolved. In mid-October screening re-commenced, under the supervision of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC), and was scheduled for completion by 22 January 1954. But it quickly struck problems. Winnington and

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[189] An undated article by Armour Milne entitled "Treason case for Korea dropped", Needham Papers, folder 72. The charges against Brandweiner were later dropped.
[190] Peter Williams and David Wallace, *op cit*, pp 256-257; & Lawrence Wittner, *One World or None: The Struggle Against the Bomb, Vol 1*, pp 212-213.
[191] Dr Joseph Needham, "Press Statement" for press conference, Royal Hotel, Upper Holbern, 26 September 1952, folder 35, Needham Papers IWM.
[192] Letter from S O Davies to Dr Joseph Needham, 30 October 1952, folder 66, *ibid*.
[193] Wilfred Burchett & Alan Winnington, *Plain Perfidy*, pp 67 & 76.

Burchett maintained that South Korean and *Kuomintang* agents had tightened their holds over the southern camps and, under the eye of the American military, were coercing communist prisoners into renouncing their right to return home.[194] On 16 December, the journalists attended a press conference, at which recently returned communist prisoners from the UN camps told of beatings and murders inflicted on inmates who had refused to join Chiang and Rhee's armies. Later, Winnington and Burchett noted "the association between torture, murder and 'screening.'"[195] A more subdued NNRC also reported "that "[a]cts of violence were committed against those [prisoners] who desired to exercise their right of repatriation." Rather than being voluntary, Burchett and Winnington emphasised that repatriation "was an American cold-war weapon."[196]

But it was a dual-edged weapon as well. Three hundred and fifty-one UN prisoners had expressed their desire to remain in communist hands. Amongst them were 22 Americans and a Briton, the remainder being South Koreans. The UN press claimed that the prisoners were being forcibly detained. To refute the story, six UN correspondents were smuggled into the prisoners' compound, including Russell Spurr of the London *Daily Express*. Spurr invited the Briton, Andrew Condron, to accompany him to the UN side. Condron politely declined. He and his fellow non-repatriates instead jointly stated that they "[were] staying of [their] own free will and inspite of repeated efforts by the Chinese and Koreans to persuade [them] to return."[197] For Burchett and Winnington, the prisoners' stand reinforced the righteousness of the communist cause and the moral superiority of peoples' democracy over capitalism. As such, the non-repatriates became Burchett and Winnington's weapons in a propaganda war of words. Like the Americans, the journalists were not above using voluntary repatriation as a 'cold-war weapon.'

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In late 1952, 500 copies of Wilfred's *This Monstrous War* were seized by US Customs and dumped into the sea off the American coast.[198] But copies of *Koje Unscreened* did filter into the US, one of which reached M G Spangler, the Professor of Civil Engineering at Iowa State College. In August 1953, Spangler wrote to the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, disclosing he had received a copy of *Koje* from "a scientific society in China" and found it "very disturbing." He asked Dulles for "an appraisal of the authors and an evaluation of the material." In response, the Chief of the State Department's Public Liaison Division, Howard A Cook, explained to Spangler that Burchett and Winnington had a "close relationship . . . [with] the Communist military command", and had "assisted in forcing confessions of bacteriological warfare from American prisoners." Cook added, *Koje* was

[194] *Ibid*, p 166.
[195] *Ibid*, pp 147, 159 & 144.
[196] The "Interim Report of the NNRC" was cited *ibid*, pp 191 & 193..
[197] Cited Wilfred Burchett & Alan Winnington, *op cit*, p 221.
[198] Cited by Gavan McCormack in "Korea: Wilfred Burchett's Thirty Years' War", Ben Kiernan (ed) *op cit*, p 164.

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But it was a dual-edged weapon as well. Three hundred and fifty-one UN prisoners had expressed their desire to remain in communist hands. Amongst them were 22 Americans and a Briton, the remainder being South Koreans. The UN press claimed that the prisoners were being forcibly detained. To refute the story, six UN correspondents were smuggled into the prisoners' compound, including Russell Spurr of the London *Daily Express*. Spurr invited the Briton, Andrew Condron, to accompany him to the UN side. Condron politely declined. He and his fellow non-repatriates instead jointly stated that they "[were] staying of [their] own free will and inspite of repeated efforts by the Chinese and Koreans to persuade [them] to return."[197] For Burchett and Winnington, the prisoners' stand reinforced the righteousness of the communist cause and the moral superiority of peoples' democracy over capitalism. As such, the non-repatriates became Burchett and Winnington's weapons in a propaganda war of words. Like the Americans, the journalists were not above using voluntary repatriation as a 'cold-war weapon.'

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In late 1952, 500 copies of Wilfred's *This Monstrous War* were seized by US Customs and dumped into the sea off the American coast.[198] But copies of *Koje Unscreened* did filter into the US, one of which reached M G Spangler, the Professor of Civil Engineering at Iowa State College. In August 1953, Spangler wrote to the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, disclosing he had received a copy of *Koje* from "a scientific society in China" and found it "very disturbing." He asked Dulles for "an appraisal of the authors and an evaluation of the material." In response, the Chief of the State Department's Public Liaison Division, Howard A Cook, explained to Spangler that Burchett and Winnington had a "close relationship . . . [with] the Communist military command", and had "assisted in forcing confessions of bacteriological warfare from American prisoners." Cook added, *Koje* was

[194] *Ibid*, p 166.
[195] *Ibid*, pp 147, 159 & 144.
[196] The "Interim Report of the NNRC" was cited *ibid*, pp 191 & 193..
[197] Cited Wilfred Burchett & Alan Winnington, *op cit*, p 221.
[198] Cited by Gavan McCormack in "Korea: Wilfred Burchett's Thirty Years' War", Ben Kiernan (ed) *op cit*, p 164.

part of the communists' campaign of "spread[ing] . . . lies about issues which they believe[d] to be important."[199]

Carrying the State Department's stamp, Cook stated the official position on Koje, and Burchett and Winnington's involvement in the germ warfare allegations. Crafted for the public's consumption, the official line was too dismissive of the journalists' side of the story to be entirely believable. Though Burchett and Winnington had certainly honed their words as weapons, they also wrote about the more disturbing aspects of the Americans' conduct in Korea. Indeed, as has been revealed, British Foreign Office diplomats had privately echoed the journalists' concerns about the American military's maladministration of the Koje Island prison camp, and the US Air Force's violations of the neutral zone around the Kaesong peace talks site. But these stories, which damaged the UN's reputation, were not for public release, and so Burchett and Winnington in telling them, were denigrated as communist propagandists - as distinct from leftist journalists - to bolster the UN's side of the story.

The germ warfare story, however, sealed the journalists' fates, particularly as they employed testimonies from American prisoners-of-war to authenticate their reports. The evidence clearly indicates the Chinese communists, and not Burchett and Winnington, interrogated the prisoners. The journalists merely interviewed the prisoners after the interrogations and reported their confessions. But the story has never been fully substantiated, though the US military had not only developed the bacteriological warfare capability to conduct the alleged campaign in Korea, but also, in subsequent years, tested that capability on their own people.[200] Furthermore, the widespread use of defoliants during the Vietnam War was indicative of the US military's ambivalence towards restraint on chemical and biological weapons. To the credit of Burchett, Winnington and the International Scientific Commission, they investigated the allegations and reported the facts as they perceived them. Though the story still remains contentious, the searching investigation conducted by Joseph Needham, and subsequent circumstantial evidence, supports Burchett and Winnington's claims. For their trouble they were branded as traitors and banished from their countries.

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[199] Letter from M G Spangler, Research Professor, Civil Engineering, Iowa Sate College, to J F Dulles, Secretary of State, State Department, Washington DC, 13 August 1953; & letter from Howard A Cook, Chief, Division of Public Liaison, State Department, 1 October 1953; NARA MISC Record Group 59.
[200] See Chapter 11, "Ruptures" and the correspondence between Needham and the former editor of the *Shanghai Monthly Review*, John W Powell.

Chapter 6 The Traitor

In early 1953 a slight booklet appeared in radical bookshops. Anonymously authored, *He Chose Truth: The Inspirational Story of Wilfred Burchett* had been published by the ACP's Australasian Book Society. At the time, Australian social realist writers and radical journalists were honing their words for use in coming Cold War battles. *Truth* was amongst their armoury. Wilfred's life had been suitably shaped to ensure that 'truth' resided on the radical side of history.

Truth was also a labour of fatherly love, penned by George to justify his son's craftsmanship and integrity when both were besieged. The Wilfred of *Truth* was not only a "principled journalist", but also a man of "great ability, strong character and manifest honesty." He had experienced the Depression and Nazism, and seen the devastation of the Bomb. He had been too morally minded to grab fame and fortune in Fleet Street, so rather than "sell his soul", he left to fight for peace and trumpet socialism's inevitable triumph over feudalism and capitalism. As "an observer and prophet", he had "discerned what was new and significant, [and] what was emerging, and what would grow." He had also reported on American warmongering and its other Cold War deceits. His "truth" was of the cause, which "d[id] "not commend [him] to the pillars of the decaying order."[1] Nonetheless, he remained a patriot, though in the radical mould - democratically tempered with an Australian bias.

It was not a sentiment shared by all, especially those scripting the other side of the story. As George's inspirational Wilfred was being read and appreciated in radical circles, another Burchett was being conceived in the most improbable of circumstances.

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Dr Ronald Walker was the Australian Ambassador in Tokyo. On 8 September 1953, he cabled an urgent and sensitive request to the Department of External Affairs in Canberra from the United States' Far Eastern Command (FEC). An unnamed American correspondent at Panmunjom - later revealed as International News Services's (INS) Ed Hymoff - had apparently confided to US Army officers that Burchett "desir[ed] to leave North Korea and return to Australia." According to Hymoff, Burchett wanted assurances that on his return "he would not be prosecuted or suffer any penalty for his association with the Communists and his past activities." FEC was "most anxious" to interrogate Burchett, as he might "have information of exceptional value." Given Burchett's terms, such an eventuality required the support of the Menzies Government. Perhaps as an inducement, the Americans offered the Australians joint interrogation facilities, either in Korea or on Okinawa. The Americans were also willing to "give any necessary assistance in connection with [Burchett's] repatriation to Australia, including . . . financial assistance so that he would not be destitute on arrival." Furthermore, the operation was highly recommended. Walker stressed that generals Dean and Clark supported it. Clark had apparently implored that it be treated with "considerable urgency" and

[1] A Fellow Author, *He Chose Truth: The Inspiring Story of Wilfred Burchett*, pp 15, 74, 83 & 3.

discretion. "Any leakage" or delay, he stressed, might imperil the "prospects of bringing Burchett out at all."[2]

Walker's cable was promptly forwarded to the Director-General of ASIO, Charles Spry, who, on 9 September, discussed the matter with Menzies' private secretary, J R Willoughby. As a military man, 'King and country' patriot, and staunch anti-communist, Spry considered Burchett a traitor.[3] As he explained to Willoughby, Burchett "had actively associated himself with the North Korean cause." Nevertheless, Spry was aware of the "considerable legal difficulty in the way of prosecuting [Burchett] even if the material . . . were available." For starters, Burchett's comments on the Korean War were critical of the Americans and not the Australians. Indeed, Spry found that "[Burchett] had not on any occasion made any reference to Australia to which exception could be taken." Furthermore, the *Crimes Act* lacked the extra-territorial jurisdiction to pursue alleged traitors for offences committed beyond Australia and its territories. But Walker's cable had raised Spry's hopes. He suggested to Willoughby that Burchett's request for immunity might mask "some offence unknown to us but known to him." Therefore, granting it would be premature, rendering Burchett immune "from all prosecution . . . whatever subsequent information might come to light."[4]

Spry's suspicions might have swayed Menzies, but it was the stinging parliamentary attack from the Labor Party's Catholic right that evening which convinced the Prime Minister. For some time members of Labor's Catholic right had been critical of the Menzies Government for being soft on communists. The members were associated with B A Santamaria's secretive Movement and its Industrial 'Groups.' Seven of Victoria's nine Labor MHRs were 'groupers', each doggedly determined to banish communists from the trade union movement and political life in general. Menzies was equally determined, though after the failure of his campaign to outlaw the CPA, he was painfully aware of his legal limitations.

Of particular concern to Menzies was the recent return to Australia from Peking of the Federated Ironworkers Association's General Secretary, Ernie Thornton, after a stint with the World Federation of Trade Unions' Asian Liaison Bureau. As Thornton's stay had coincided with the Korean War, it was not surprising that his unimpeded return rankled 'groupers' and the Government alike.

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[2] Hymoff's involvement was finally revealed in 1975. See "Burchett snubbed CIA bribe", and Wilfred Burchett's accompanying article, *National Guardian*, 18 February 1976. The confidential cablegram from Dr Walker, the Australian Embassy in Tokyo, to External Affairs, Canberra, 8 September 1953, NAA6119/XR1, item 13, folios 66-69.

[3] Charles Spry, born into a military family, continued the line. He was educated at Brisbane Grammar and Duntroon, after which he served in Greece, Palestine and New Guinea during the Second World War. He was briefly a personal assistant to Field-Marshal Thomas Blamey. After the War, Spry was appointed Director of Military Intelligence, which he promptly purged of suspected communists. On the recommendation of the Minister of National Development in the Menzies Government, Richard Casey, Spry was appointed the Director-General of ASIO on 9 July 1950. He quickly initiated the implementation of travel restrictions on Australians seeking to visit communist countries. See David McKnight's *Australia's Spies and their Secrets*, pp 38-47.

[4] Note for file entitled "Wilfred Graham Burchett", Director-General - Security, Charles Spry, 9 September 1953; NAA *op cit*, folio 7.

Without the legal recourse to bar Thornton, Menzies was forced to weather parliamentary attacks from 'groupers', Jack Mullens and Stan Keon. Mindful of their party's opposition to the Communist Party Dissolution Bill, Menzies reminded the pair that Thornton's return was "a constitutional problem which involve[d] a constitutional right." Mullens, in response, inquired if the Government intended "to put out the red carpet" for Burchett. Menzies retorted "that if we had the power to exclude from this country the Thorntons and the other people to whom the honourable gentleman has referred, we should do so with infinite pleasure, but we have no power to exclude them from Australia."[5]

Nonetheless, the Government was not about to ease their passage to Australia or, as in Burchett's case, to forgive and forget. Accordingly, the External Affairs' Secretary, Alan Watt, instructed Walker to inform FEC that after consideration at the "highest level", the Government would not "give Burchett any assurance that he w[ould] not be liable to proceedings or any actions in Australia", or contribute to his repatriation. Watt emphasised that the Government, despite having "no legal power to exclude [Burchett]", had "not the least desire that [he] should return", and would do all within its might to keep him out. The decision, Watt added, had been prompted by the "storm" surrounding Thorton's return. As Watt explained: "If a second even more notorious communist sympathiser returned, particularly with Government assistance or guarantee, there would be public outcry, especially from men who had fought in Korea or their relatives." Watt asked Walker to detail the situation to Clark, "making it clear that his interest in the case led to the matter being seriously considered . . . at the highest level.[6]

The Americans, however, were willing to pay substantially to entice Burchett across. Burchett later confided to the APC's Reverend Victor James, that he had been offered $US100,000, plus "a house and residence permit for any country in Western Europe."[7] The Americans had good reasons for making the offer. Burchett's sudden appearance in the West could have been used to 'killed' the germ warfare story, as reminders of it began to straggle from communist prison camps.

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On 9 September, several recently repatriated pilots, who had confessed to conducting germ warfare missions over communist territory, faced western pressmen for the first time since their release. One of the pilots was Walker Mahurin, the US Air Force's most decorated airman and a former assistant secretary to Thomas K Finletter, the US Secretary of the Air Force. While on Finletter's staff, Mahurin had visited the US bacteriological warfare establishment at Fort Detrick. He failed to mention this during the press conference. Given the circumstances, it was obviously not the type of disclosure that Mahurin or his military minders wanted aired. Mahurin, after all, was trying to clear his and the US Air Force's name, and evade possible charges of treason. To do so, he had to

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[5] *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 9 September 1953.
[6] Top Secret and emergency cablegram from Alan Watt, the Secretary, Department of External of Affairs, to Dr Ronald Walker, Australian Embassy, Tokyo, 10 September 1953, *ibid*, folio 87.
[7] Letter from Wilfred to the Reverend Victor James, 27 May 1956, BPC Papers, MU. See also "Burchett snubbed CIA bribe", *op cit.*

renounce his confession, discredit its disseminators, and avoid making potentially damaging disclosures.[8]

In an apparently compelling performance, Mahurin stumbled through details of his captivity and 'forced' confession. As his fellow confessors - Voss, Brooks and Evans - looked on, Mahurin recounted the threats and beatings, his prolonged periods in solitary confinement, and his unbroken 30-day stretch on a stool. His interrogators, he stammered, had been "as cruel as you could think", and he had tried to suicide rather than confess. Evidently, behind-the-scenes had lurked Burchett and Winnington. Mahurin had been told the pair revised the confessions, changing "dates" and "sentence structure", and ensuring that the English was presentable. Mahurin told of meeting Winnington in December 1952. The latter had sat on a military tribunal before which Mahurin appeared. He had also met Burchett, on the eve of his repatriation, and found the journalist "very pleasant." When the transcript of Mahurin's press conference appeared in the *US News & World Report* on 18 September, he was no longer the villain but the victim, whose confession had been extracted by "tricks, lies, death threats [and] tortures."[9] Burchett and Winnington were evolving into the real villains.

On 2 October, the *Report*, under the banner, "A Strange Case of Two Traitors", suggested that "apple-cheeked" Winnington and "hatchet-faced" Burchett were a "new kind of traitor . . [who] worked actively for the enemy." They were no longer the backroom editors of Mahurin's press conference, but active participants, "extract[ing] confessions from American aviators by torture." Burchett and Winnington, and not the Chinese, had concocted "the 'germ warfare' hoax", and through their broadcasts and "reams of written propaganda", convinced the world of the aviators' guilt. Furthermore, the pair had toured UN prison camps, attempting to subvert the inmates, and had "fed the world a great amount of highly effective communist propaganda" during the peace talks.[10]

The article had an unexpected twist. The *Report* was generally regarded as the mouthpiece of American policy. Rather rashly, its piece on the pair had accused the British and Australian governments of neither punishing nor instituting measures to curtail Burchett and Winnington's activities. Accompanying the article was a photograph of Burchett talking with an American prisoner-of-war. Beneath, the caption noted: "Wilfred Burchett interrogates a US prisoner . . . and carries an Australian passport."[11] The Menzies Government was stung by the attack. Several days before its publication, the tigerish Mullens had passed similar remarks in the House.[12] To find them being

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[8] See Stephen L Endicott, "Germ Warfare and Plausible Denial 1952-53", Joseph Needham Papers, Folder 139, Box 95/10/5. Endicott claimed that Mahurin later confirmed his visits to Fort Detrick in an interview with Professor Selden.

[9] On 9 September the correspondent from the *US News & World Report* cabled his editor that he had "deliberately retained Mahurin's confusion in words . . . stumbling etecetra because preserves the drama of his account." See NAA 6119/XR1, item 15, folio 121. For an account of Mahurin's interview see the *US News & World Report*, 18 September 1953.

[10] "Strange Case of Two Traitors", *US News & World Report*, 2 October 1953.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 29 September 1953.

repeated by an ally pricked the Government, and External Affairs promptly warned Washington that such comments were "prejudicial to the American-Australian relationship."[13]

The warning was justified. The Government, albeit tardily, had been mulling over the possibility of prosecuting Burchett. Spry had been most active. He had briefed the Solicitor-General, Professor Kenneth Bailey, on the case; written to Menzies, detailing the points of his discussion with Willoughby; and initiated a search of Department of Immigration records for details of Burchett's travel documentation.[14] The search proved fruitless, prompting speculation that Burchett might hold a British passport.[15]

In late September, Spry had sought clarification on the Government's legal position from Bailey and the Attorney-General, John Spicer. Spry was convinced that Burchett had breached the permissible limits of dissent and indulged in treasonable activities. As he explained to Spicer and Bailey, reports seemed to suggest that Burchett had engaged in propaganda activities against the UN forces, "persuade[d UN prisoners-of-war] to forsake their duty", and "arouse[d] in Australia opposition to the UN's action in Korea." Though the reports were unsubstantiated, Spry assumed that there was "a reasonable chance of obtaining . . . evidence" on which to establish a case, "if the effort [was] made in that direction." However, he was concerned about the limited legal options open to the Crown for a successful prosecution. Spry asked Spicer and Bailey if the *Crimes Act* was adequately empowered to deal with "all of the things . . . which at common law [were] treason." He was particularly concerned about Section 24 of the *Act*, which limited its geographical jurisdiction to Australia and its territories. Given that Korea was a UN police action and not a declared war, Spry also queried if the North Koreans and Chinese could be legally construed as the "Queen's enemies." If, as Spry suspected, the *Act* was inadequately drafted, he wondered whether Burchett could be prosecuted in the Victorian Supreme Court under the *Australian Courts Act* or the *Courts (Colonial) Jurisdiction Act*, both of which harboured the extra-territorial clout lacking in the *Crimes Act*.[16]

On 8 October Spry raised the prospect with Bailey of sending an ASIO agent to Tokyo, to collect evidence on Burchett. Bailey was agreeable, and instructed Spry to make the necessary arrangements with External Affairs. Spry also asked if the Americans had renewed their attempts to lure Burchett across. Bailey was unsure. He was completely stumped, however, when Spry queried the Government's response should Burchett enter "Hong Kong or some such place" from which he

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[13] See the secret cablegram from the Department of External Affairs to the Australian Embassy, Tokyo, 27 July 1954; NAA6119/XR1, item 15, folio 21.
[14] "Notes for the Director-General", 11 September 1953, NAA6119/XR1, item 13, Folios 99-102. Secret letter from C C F Spry, Director-General, ASIO to R G Menzies, Prime Minister, September 1953; *ibid*, folio 80.
[15] "Telephone message" from Harold McGinness, Department of Immigration, Canberra, to ASIO, Melbourne, 23 September 1953; *ibid*, folio 103.
[16] Memorandum by Charles Spry, Director-General, ASIO, 26 September 1953; *ibid*, folios 106-115.

could be extradited. Bailey and the Government were totally unprepared for such an eventuality.[17] Indeed, the Solicitor-General seemed remarkably indifferent to Spry's concerns.

On 12 October Spry sent Bailey a rather pointed "note for discussion." In it, Spry emphasised that Burchett was an enemy propagandist, whose reports from Korea had been far too uncritical of the communists, whilst excessively savage towards the UN. To support his position, Spry cited the Melbourne *Herald's* Denis Warner. A former colleague of Burchett's during the Pacific War, Warner was closely aligned with Australian and American military and security establishments, and was not an admirer of Burchett's work in Korea. Burchett, Warner argued, had sacrificed objectivity and "the leavening of reason" for "bias and vituperation." Warner's comments seemingly hardened Spry's conviction that Burchett was a communist propagandist whose work had "g[iven] aid and comfort to the enemy." Spry also suggested to Bailey that Burchett's books clearly indicated that "he [had] moved freely among prisoners" and, presumably, had "actively engaged" in seducing them from their allegiances to the UN. Again, Spry urged that evidence undoubtedly existed to substantiate this, and requested that listings be compiled of prisoners and journalists likely to have information on Burchett's activities. Spry warned Bailey that Burchett could not be "regarded as a man of no account." His work had contributed to weakening "UN resistance."[18]

Perhaps the "note" prodded Bailey into action, for within days he had discussed the Tokyo trip and related matters with ASIO's Deputy Director-General (Administration & Legal), Bernard Tuck, a physically handicapped man, though with a sharp and juridical mind. Bailey urged Tuck that the investigation should be "kept secret for as long as possible, particularly bearing in mind matters of public opinion and the like." Perhaps Bailey was mindful of the potential political damage if news of the investigation seeped out and was not followed by a prosecution. Bailey also introduced Tuck to James Plimsoll, who had recently returned to External Affairs in Canberra from his spell with United Nations Commission for the Unification & Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK). Plimsoll offered Tuck "every possible assistance", but warned that Burchett, unlike Winnington, "was not resented" by UN correspondents.[19]

In the meantime, Spry had received his list of likely journalists. On it was Charles Maddern of the Melbourne *Sun* who had recently returned from Korea. When, in late October, Spry and a colleague visited Maddern, they noted that he was neither an "admirer of Burchett," nor had "conversed with him at length." But Maddern had spotted Burchett wearing a "Chinese type uniform" at Panmunjom in mid-1952. As a result, Spry promptly earmarked Maddern as a potential prosecution witness. On 4 November Spry sent a colleague to substantiate Maddern's story. On this occasion,

[17] "Notes for discussion with the Solicitor-General", 8 October 1953, *ibid*, folio 141.
[18] "Note for discussion with the Solicitor-General" by Charles Spry, 12 October 1953, *ibid*, folios 131-140; and Denis Warner, the Melbourne *Herald*, 21 June 1952, cited *ibid*.
[19] Memorandum for record purposes", ASIO Headquarters, Melbourne, 16 October 1953, *ibid*, folio 148.

however, Maddern claimed that Burchett was clad in "civilian dress of Russian type." Presumably, Maddern was deleted from Spry's list.[20]

ASIO's Regional Director in NSW, Ron Richards, also approached his confidants in the Sydney press. Amongst them was the *Daily Telegraph's* Ronald Monson, who had covered the siege of Tobruk with distinction, and had later met Burchett - once - in Calcutta, where he was allegedly conducting a lucrative blackmarket business. Monson introduced Richards to Lockie McDonald, a New Zealander who was the London *Daily Mail's* correspondent in South-East Asia and a close friend of Warner. McDonald was passing through Australia from New Zealand *en route* to his Singapore base. Coincidently, he was travelling on the same QANTAS flight as ASIO agents, Tuck and Hunter, bound for Tokyo and Korea to gather evidence on Burchett.

On 26 October Richards introduced the agents to McDonald at Sydney's Mascot Aerodrome. Three days later, Tuck and Hunter advised Spry from Singapore that McDonald, though prepared to testify against Burchett, was "not anxious to do so."[21] Nonetheless, McDonald had given a statement, which primarily detailed his curt conversation with Burchett at Operation Little Switch - the exchange of sick and injured prisoners-of-war - on 14 April. It had been a frosty affair, initiated by Burchett, though without the formality of a handshake. He had apparently asked McDonald what the Australians thought of him. In reply, McDonald told of his recent flight from Japan to Seoul with the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), during which a RAAF officer had suggested that if McDonald could lure Burchett across, the officer would willingly dump him back over the communist peace delegation's headquarters. McDonald recalled that Burchett "laughed and said, 'so they feel like that.'" A scribbled after-thought at the foot of the statement alleged that Burchett also said: "He had seen an article 'on him' by Denis Warner, and would see him some day." Though chilly, the conversation was not, as Roland Perry later suggested, malicious.[22]

Tuck and Hunter arrived in Tokyo on 3 November.[23] In the weeks beforehand, the Australian Ambassador, Walker, and the Commander-in-Chief of the Commonwealth Forces in Korea, General Wells, had arranged for the agents to meet senior FEC officers. With FEC's failure to lure Burchett across, its officers should have relished the prospect of legal proceedings, and the opportunity they provided to discredit Burchett and the germ warfare allegations. Indeed, the agents' departure from Mascot had coincided with a forthright rebuttal of the allegations by the US Ambassador to the UN,

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[20] "Notes re W.B.", 23 October 1953, *ibid*, folio 165; "Interview by Director-General and Director B1 with Charles Maddern on 23 October 1953", *ibid*, folio 182B; "Note for file" by ASIO Legal Officer, 4 November 1953, *ibid*, folio 182A.
[21] Cablegram from Tuck and Hunter to the Director-General, 29 October 1953, *ibid*, folio 186.
[22] Statement by John Ferguson McDonald, Singapore, 28 October 1953, *ibid*, folios 184-185. For another view of Burchett and McDonald's meeting see Roland Perry's *The Exile: Burchett Reporter of Conflict*, p 118. Perry alleges that Burchett said to McDonald: "You're just like Denis Warner . . . You tell Warner I've been watching his stuff about me. Some day I'll get him." This remark does not appear in McDonald's statement to ASIO's Hunter and Richards.
[23] Letter from Tuck and Hunter to Colonel Spry, 4 November 1953, *ibid*, folios 196-197.

Charles Mayo, in the General Assembly.[24] But FEC seemed oddly circumspect. Though willing to assist the Australians, FEC's Major-General Riley F Ennis stressed that the Americans' role was to remain a secret. Furthermore, Ennis requested that the Australian Government should seek FEC's authorisation before using its material against Burchett.[25]

Joe Carusi was a lawyer on Ennis' staff. In preparation for Tuck and Hunter's visit, Carusi had been burrowing through FEC's files and "interrogation" reports on returning prisoners-of-war for information about Burchett. Though scant, his findings supported already established evidence. Like Spry, Carusi noted that Burchett, while "highly critical of the United States, . . . [had] at all times been very careful not to voice any criticism either directly or by innuendo against the Australian Government." More damningly, however, Carusi found that Burchett had "revised" and "recorded" the germ warfare confessions of Evans, Schwable and Bley. Evans had neglected to mention this during the 9 September press conference, which was particularly surprising given Mahurin's remark on Burchett's pleasantness. Carusi also "suspected" that Burchett had edited the "critical and offensive document" issued by the 23 UN prisoners who had decided against returning to the West.[26]

On 4 November, Ennis presented Carusi's report to Hunt and Tuck. It heralded an uneventful spell for the agents. Searches of 1,500 FEC's files had apparently uncovered little worth noting, and the agents informed Spry that further rummaging was "not expected to provide us with much more than leads to evidence obtainable in the United States."[27] "[A] friend" was looking for additional sources of information, but this too proved disappointing. The agents found FEC's Japanese Liaison Officer, Colonel Tait, more forthcoming. Tait was responsible for monitoring Radio Peking, and presented the agents with a fairly "complete" record of Burchett's broadcasts. FEC's Foreign Military Liaison Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Field was also helpful - or so it seemed. He confided that Hymoff was the correspondent involved in the approach to lure Burchett across. Field dismissively added that there was "no great advantage" in contacting Hymoff, and Tuck and Hunter dutifully swallowed his advice. Presumably, Field had also told them that FEC had not pursued the "matter" once "informed of the Australian Government's position." Hymoff might have told a different story. The Americans, well aware of the Australians' touchiness on Burchett, perhaps considered it best not to open old sores, now that both sides were working towards the same outcome.[28]

Attached to the Carusi's report was a list of correspondents whom FEC suggested had been acquainted with, or influenced by, Burchett in Korea. The list included AP's Bob Eunson, Jim Becker, Sam Summerlin, William Barnard and George McArthur; Jim Greenfield of *Time-Life*; Reuter's Peter

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[24] Charles W Mayo, "The Role of Forced Confessions in the Communist 'Germ Warfare' Propaganda Campaign", a statement by Charles W Mayo to the United Nations' General Assembly on 26 October 1953 as reported by the *US Department of State Bulletin*, 16 November 1953.
[25] For details of the meeting see the "secret" cablegram from the Australian Embassy, Tokyo, to Professor Bailey, 5 November 1953, *ibid*, folio 204.
[26] Memorandum from J S Carusi to General Ennis, 30 October 1953, *op cit*, folios 244-246.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] Letter from Tuck and Hunter to Colonel Spry, Tokyo, 10 November 1953, *ibid*, folios 205-206.

Robinson; Keyes Beech of the *Chicago Daily News* and the London *Times'* Eric Brittter. Tuck and Hunter hoped that the correspondents would confirm that Burchett had acted not as a journalist in Korea, but in a semi-official or official capacity for the communists.

Superficially, this seemed to be the case. All of the correspondents approached, agreed that Burchett had dressed in a Chinese "uniform", though without a military insignia; however, none disclosed that Burchett had neglected to pack his winter wardrobe, and so had no choice other than to 'go native' or freeze.[29] All agreed that Burchett had travelled about the talks' site in a "Russian jeep" with a Chinese driver; but none told that communist correspondents - like their UN counterparts - relied on the military for transport. And all agreed that he appeared to have boundless access to the North Korean and Chinese delegations. Many of those approached confided that they had exploited Burchett's access.

All of the correspondents supported the UN intervention in Korea, placing them immediately at odds with Burchett. Most, for the good of the war effort, loyally wrote the officially sanctioned line, with perhaps the occasional misgiving. Keyes Beech, for example, was an American patriot, fervently anti-communist, and a believer in the righteousness of the UN cause. Beech had once asked Burchett if he "believ[ed] that Mahurin was the kind of guy who would drop germ bombs?" The possibility of Mahurin's guilt was incomprehensible to Beech. He was too blinkered to take up Burchett's challenge and investigate this and the latter's other stories. So he dismissively told the agents that Burchett's work was "obvious crap."[30] So too did Britter and Robinson. Like Beech, they reported the UN line and considered Burchett an official communist functionary. Indeed, Robinson told the agents that Burchett and Winnington were regarded by "all [UN] correspondents as official communist spokesmen."[31] If, indeed, Robinson was correct, then many of those correspondents interviewed by the agents, at one stage or another, had knowingly publicised communist propaganda.

George McArthur was less certain than Britter and Robinson. McArthur felt that Burchett acted "as if [he was] a communist official." Yet, as McArthur confessed, he still sought information from Burchett.[32] So too did Jim Greenfield, another patriotic American who later served as the Under-Secretary of State in the Nixon Administration. He thought that Burchett acted as "a disseminator of information" rather than a journalist. Nonetheless, Burchett was Greenfield's "first source of official information" on the communist side, and his leaks often proved correct.[33] William Barnard, too, told the agents that Burchett always gave "accurate accounts of the communist line", while Bob Eunson confided that he was on good working terms with the Australian, and had once ran an errand for him.[34]

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[29] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 161.
[30] Statement by Keyes Beech, Tokyo, 25 November 1953, NAA 6119 XR1, item 14, folio 5.
[31] Statement by Peter Desmond John Robinson, Tokyo, 10 November 1953, *ibid*, 5; and statement by Eric Britter, 27 November 1953, *ibid*.
[32] Statement by George Alexander McArthur, Tokyo, 13 November 1953, *ibid*.
[33] See the statement by James Lloyd Greenfield, Seoul, 18 November 1953, *ibid*.
[34] Statement by William Calvert Barnard, Tokyo, 16 November 1953, & Robert Eunson, Chief of Bureau, Associated Press, Tokyo, undated; *ibid*.

All had used Burchett's leaks to out-scoop their rivals; and all, to a lesser degree, had disseminated his so-called communist propaganda. Though unprepared to countenance the germ warfare allegations, all had apparently realised that there was some substance to Burchett's side of story.

On 18 November AP correspondents, Sam Summerlin and Jim Becker, approached Burchett at Panmunjon, handed him copies of *This Monstrous War* and *Koje Unscreened,* and asked if he had written "this shit." Burchett affirmed that he had. Summerlin then asked Burchett to autograph the books for "a friend of Bob Eunson." After leafing through them, Burchett obliged, and asked if Summerlin could get him some copies. Summerlin assured that he "w[ould] see what we c[ould] do about it." Shortly afterwards, Summelin returned the signed books to Tuck and Hunter. Wilfred had unwittingly confirmed to ASIO his authorship of both books. They were to be presented as evidence of his communist propaganda in any forthcoming trial.[35]

On their return to Tokyo, the agents received sobering news. FEC's Colonel Richard Collins had been scrutinising reports based on the observations of those who had interrogated returning prisoners of war. Collins discovered that of the 1,500 reports so far examined, Burchett's name had only appeared in 15 of them. In each, Collins explained, the "information . . . found amount[ed] . . . to a mere sketchy and inconclusive statement." Collins suggested that "since Burchett and his activities were of no particular interest to the US . . . no mention of him was made in the reports." It was an odd remark, given FEC's efforts to lure Burchett across. Nonetheless, Collins reassured that "information" would eventually emerge which "[w]ould unquestionably . . . establish a *prima facie* case against Burchett."[36] Collins was hopeful that this information would be obtained from those American prisoners-of-war, who had initially decided against returning to the West, but changed their minds at the last moment.

One of those was Corporal Edward Dickenson who, after a bout of homesickness, had decided to return to the US. Dickenson might have been coaxed out by US Army broadcasts claiming that non-repatriates, on their return to the US, would not face desertion charges, though as one of the interrogators of returning prisoners, Captain Bert Cumby emphasised, "other misdeeds" could not be ignored. Cumby considered Dickenson "one of the most flagrant collaborators."[37] Presumably Cumby was on the interrogation team that tackled Dickenson on 29 October. The interrogation was tailored to address "the . . . request of the Australian Government" for information on Burchett, and Dickenson played his part accordingly. His innocence, after all, partially depended upon him convincing his interrogators of Burchett's guilt; and so he accused Burchett of orchestrating the non-repatriates' statement and subsequent press conference, and of warning them about the problems faced by Quinn, O'Neal and other repatriates on their return to the US. Dickenson also stated that Burchett was a "press

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[35] Statements by Jim Becker & Samuel Summerlin, Tokyo, 18 November 1953; *ibid.*
[36] Memorandum from Colonel Richard Collins Jr, G2 AFFE Adv to J2 FEC, 20 November 1953; NAA6119/XR1, item 13, folios 248-249.
[37] Cited by Eugene Kinkead, *Why They Collaborated*, p 77. See also the secret memorandum from Hunter and Tuck to Spry, 23 November 1953, *ibid*, folios 252-253.

relations expert", whose role was to pass communist "news releases to other correspondents . . . covering the talks." It, Dickenson added, was "indicative of the trust that the communists had in him." As a prisoner-of-war, who on his own admission had spoken infrequently with Burchett, it was highly improbable that Dickenson was suitably positioned to substantiate these claims. More importantly, if, as Dickenson asserted, Burchett was so well trusted by the communists, then it was an indictment of US Army intelligence's tardiness for not adequately monitoring his activities. Dickenson failed to gain clemency, and was subsequently tried as an "enemy agent" and imprisoned.[38]

On 21 November, Lieutenant-Colonel Field met the agents in Tokyo's Maronouchi Hotel. Field advised them that FEC's rummaging amongst its files had only located 35 references to Burchett. He handed the relevant documents to the agents, with the proviso that names contained in them would not be "used publicly or given to the press without the consent of those persons." Field also urged that requests from the Australian Government to interview those mentioned were to come through FEC. Field was not being territorial. In assisting Tuck and Hunter, FEC had acted without the knowledge or authority of the US Department of Army. Accordingly, Field asked the Australians not to act on the information until FEC had notified the Department "of what [had] been done." One agent noticed that those mentioned on FEC's list did not include the germ warfare confessors. Field confided that their "positions . . . were still under consideration" and "it appear[ed] that those airmen ha[d] been guilty of offences against the [US] Military Code; and . . . action m[ight] be taken against him." He cautioned that "in any event, [the agents] might not consider those airmen the most desirable witnesses."[39] It was an odd comment. In Mayo's speech to the UN General Assembly on 26 October, he had accused the communists of employing "coercive measures" to extract the confessions. If Mayo's assertions were correct, it was curious that US military authorities were still considering prosecuting the confessors a month after his speech.[40] In late November Tuck and Hunt returned to Australia, confident that they had pieced together a "reasonably complete picture" of Burchett's activities in Korea.[41]

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On 2 November Denis Warner met an agent from ASIO's Counter Subversion Branch in Sydney's Wentworth Hotel. Warner, along with the Hong Kong-based Richard Hughes, had been earmarked by Spry as potential prosecution witnesses. Hughes, however, who was visiting his family in Melbourne, had failed to return ASIO's calls.[42] He was an admirer of Burchett's work, considering him amongst "the best and bravest correspondents [he'd] ever known."[43] Warner did not share this

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[38] Report on the interview with Corporal Edward Dickenson, 29 October 1953; NAA6119/XR1, item 13, folios 238-239. See also Eugene Kinkead, *op cit*, p 80.
[39] Letter from Tuck and Hunter, to "the Director-General", Tokyo, 23 November 1953; NAA 6119/XR1, item 13, folios 252-253.
[40] Charles A Mayo, *op cit*.
[41] Letter from Tuck and Hunter to Major-General Ennis, Assistant Chief-of Staff, G2, FEC, Tokyo, 26 November 1953; NAA6119/XR1, item 14, folio 27.
[42] Cable from the Australian Embasy, Tokyo, to the Director-General of Security, 10 November 1953; NAA6119/XR1, item 13, folio 209: & the "secret" memorandum from D Branch, Attorney-General's Department, Sydney, NAA6119/XR1, item 14, folio 49.
[43] Cited in Norman Macswain, *The Man Who Read the East Wind*, p 63.

sentiment. He had publicly branded Burchett a "propagandist" and a communist "hireling and traitor, on a par with William Joyce and Tokyo Rose.[44] Such comments obviously caught Spry's eye. Yet, despite Warner's distaste for Burchett's politics, he still considered him a "first class news hawk", albeit with some longstanding ethical reservations. In 1944 Burchett and Warner had covered the US Fleet's rout of its Japanese counterpart in the Filipino Gulf of Leyte from the carrier, *USS Intrepid*. After the battle Warner flew to a nearby American base. Prior to his departure he had entrusted Burchett with the copy of his story on the battle, for transmission to the censors at Pearl Harbour. As Warner later related, Leyte had been "the biggest naval battle of the war, or any war for that matter", and so his story was an important scoop. It got lost in transit. As Warner later admitted, the loss was not Burchett's fault. However, Burchett had by-passed the American censors and sent his story directly to the Melbourne *Herald* which ran it on the front page. Out-scooped and angry, Warner confronted Burchett about the ethics of his action. Presumably, Warner felt that Burchett had been too news-hawkish on this occasion. It heralded the commencement of Australian journalism's most infamous feud, exacerbated in the post-war years by the leftward lurch in Burchett's politics. By November 1953, each intensely hated the other.[45]

Thus, the meeting at the Wentworth provided Warner with the opportunity to settle old scores. He told the ASIO agent that Burchett had been "one of a panel of six newspapermen who [had] interrogated allied prisoners-of-war about germ warfare for eight days." It was during these interrogations, Warner added, that the prisoners confessed. Presumably, Warner had either been erroneously informed, or was simply being mischievous. As previously mentioned, Burchett had sat on a panel of Chinese journalists and scientists, which questioned Quinn and Enoch after they had confessed. The implication of Warner's remark to the agent was to suggest that Burchett had been partly responsible for extracting the confessions. Indeed, it concurred with the attempt by US military authorities to shift the onus of guilt from the North Koreans and Chinese onto Burchett and Winnington. With a hint of envy, Warner also remarked that Burchett was "a great success" with the women. But the meeting concluded with an act indicative of Warner's malice towards Burchett. Warner offered the agent excerpts from his "Burchett file." Indeed, he promised to root out the most incriminating examples of Burchett's treachery. He was determined to see Burchett damned as a traitor.[46]

In mid-November, Warner's paper, the Melbourne *Herald*, ran a mischievously edited account of Mahurin's press conference, which had been published in the mid-September edition of the *US News & World Report*. Perhaps to mask its tardiness, the *Herald* claimed that details of the press conference

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[44] Denis Warner, "He Writes the Enemy's Story - Background to Australian Red Reporter Wilfred Burchett", the Melbourne *Herald*, 21 June 1952.
[45] Denis Warner, *Not Always on Horseback, An Australian Correspondent at War and Peace in Asia 1961-1993*, pp 131-132
[46] The report an interview with Denis Warner by the Principal Section Officer, B1, to the Director, NSW, 2 November 1953; NAA6119/XR1, item 13, folios 218-219. Gavan McCormack raises the point of Warner's "sexual jealousy or rivalry" in "Korea: Wilfred Burchett's Thirty Years' War", in Ben Kiernan, *op cit*, p 194.

had just been "released today." Citing from the *Report*, the *Herald* intimated that Mahurin had called Burchett and Winington "semi-official spokesmen for the Chinese." It also claimed that Burchett had participated in the preparation of the confessions, which the prisoners had been forced to copy and sign. The article, however, did not note Mahurin's claims were based on hearsay, or that he had met Burchett only once and found him "pleasant." Rather than reporting the facts, the *Herald* distorted them, so intent was it on casting Burchett as a traitor.

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In October, ASIO agents had commenced collecting statements from returning Australian prisoners-of-war on Burchett's activities in the communist-controlled camps. The agents sought to establish whether "Burchett [had] endeavoured to indoctrinate troops . . . with the idea that they were fighting for an unjust cause, or . . . in a war in which their side was violating the rules of warfare."[47]

Amongst those interviewed was Machine-Gunner Sergeant Bill Burke. On 30 July 1951, the Sydney *Daily Mirror* had detailed a "word war" between Burke and Burchett at Kaesong. The incident had happened shortly after Burchett arrived at the talks. According to the *Mirror*, Burke had taken Burchett to task for suggesting "that numbers alone w[ere] not the reason for Red victories."[48] ASIO had noted the article with interest and, in early November 1953, its agents interviewed Burke and persuaded him to make a statement.

He had been assigned to ferry Australian correspondents, Ian McCrowe and Alan Reid, to the Kaesong peace talks site. On arrival, Reid and McCrowe met and talked with Burchett, while Burke adjourned to a shady tree, where he was later joined by Burchett and their slanging match began. According to Burke's statement he had mooted that Burchett had surrendered his right to be considered as an Australian. Burchett replied that "the Chinese could, if they so desired, push [the UN troops] right out."[49] It was a stupidly intemperate and provocative remark, certainly unbefitting of a responsible war correspondent. Nonetheless, it and Burchett's other ripostes were far too pointed, fashioned more to anger Burke than sway him from his allegiances. ASIO, however, reported that Burchett's comments "formed a clear attempt to indoctrinate Burke" and "weaken his loyalty to the [UN] command." But the report also noted that "there [had been] no attempt to seduce [Burke] from his loyalty to Australia."[50]

Another prisoner-of-war approached by ASIO was Flight Lieutenant Gordon Harvey of the RAAF's 77th Squadron. Harvey had been shot down and captured by the communists in February 1951, and met Burchett during his tour of the Yalu River prison camps in April 1952. According to

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[47] Memorandum from the Legal Officer, 'D' Branch, Attorney-General's Department to the Regional Director, NSW, 30 October 1953; NAA6119/XR1, item 13, folio 215.
[48] "Digger in Korea Wins Word War", the Sydney *Daily Mirror*, 30 July 1951.
[49] Statement by Machine-Gun Sergeant, Bill Burke, 9 November 1953; NAA6119/XR1, item 14, folios 12-13.
[50] Memorandum from 'D' Branch, Attorney-General's Department, to the Regional Director, NSW, 23 November 1953; NAA6119/XR1, item 13, folio 251.

Harvey's statement, Burchett had mentioned the "unreasonable demands" of the UN at the peace talks, the bacteriological warfare raids and the troubles on Koje Island, but had not made any comment against Australia's involvement in the war.[51] In May, Burchett wrote to Harvey's wife, advising that her husband was in "good health and spirits" after a recent bout of pneumonia. Mrs Harvey passed the letter onto the Attorney-General's Department, with a request for permission to thank Burchett."[52] There was nothing incriminating at all about Burchett's dealings with the Harveys. On the contrary, there was much to admire. Nonetheless, his meeting with Harvey prompted Spry to suspect "that Burchett [had] moved among Australian and British POWs and endeavoured to persuade them to forsake their duty to the [UN]."[53]

With this in mind, ASIO agents travelled to the South-West Gippsland town of Leongatha to interview Keith Gwyther on 11 November 1953. In early 1952 the editor of the Melbourne *Sun*, John Waters, had stumbled upon Gwyther's story. He had been captured at Kapyong on 24 April 1951, and sent to a prison camp on the Yalu River the following September. In the meantime, Gwyther had been wrongly listed as 'dead' by Australian military authorities. In January 1952, his name appeared on a Chinese list of UN prisoners-of-war. It prompted Waters to ask Burchett whether the list was accurate and, if it was, about the chances of obtaining Gwyther's story."[54] Burchett wrote to Gwyther, enclosing Waters' request. The story subsequently appeared in the Melbourne *Sun*, and was noted by ASIO.[55] Burchett later claimed that Gwyt' had thanked him for his "interest", and extended an invitation to visit him if was ever in the vicinity of the Yalu River.[56]

Burchett did so on May Day, 1952. Gwyther was taken to a room, accompanied by three other Australians: Don Buck, Ron Parker and Tom Hollis. According to Gwyther's ASIO statement, Burchett offered his hand, but it was ignored by the prisoners. They also declined Burchett's offer to write to their families. Gwyther recalled that Buck asked if Burchett was "a communist", which the latter denied, though with the qualification that he was sympathetic to the communist cause. Gwyther also recalled Burchett mentioning the strafing of women and children by UN planes, and the massacre on Koje Island. Gwyther reminded him of the UN prisoners who had died in the communist camps. He could not remember Burchett's reply.[57] Gwyther's account was confirmed in a joint statement by Buck, Hollis and Parker on 17 December 1953, though with a minor variation. According to them, Burchett, on being told that UN prisoners were buried nearby, had suggested "that [it] was better than being slaughtered at Koje."[58] If uttered, it was another stupidly provocative remark, made in anger

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[51] Statement by Gordon Ronald Harvey, 16 October 1953; *ibid*, folios 226-229.
[52] Letter from Wilfred Burchett to Mrs Harvey, Peking 15 May 1952, *ibid*, folio 20.
[53] Memorandum by Colonel C C F Spry entitled "Wilfred Burchett", *ibid*, folios 106-115.
[54] Letter from John Waters, the Editor, Melbourne *Sun News Pictorial*, to W Burchett, 9 January 1952; NAA6119, item 13, folio 225B.
[55] Letter from Wilfred Burchett to Pte Keith Gwyther, Kaesong, 29 January 1952; *ibid*, folio 227.
[56] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 201.
[57] Statement by Keith Roy Gwyther, 11 November 1953; *op cit*, folios 223-225.
[58] Joint statement by Donald Pattison Buck, Ronald Parker & Thomas Henry John Hollis, 17 December 1953; NAA6119/XR1, item 14, folios 74-75.

after his overtures to assist the prisoners had been shunned. The meeting would return to haunt Burchett in later years.

Eric Donnelly was another returned prisoner, whose presence would return to haunt Burchett. As a hospitalised prisoner, Donnelly had been repatriated at Operation Little Switch in April 1953, when he fleetingly met Burchett and Winnington. Accompanying Donnelly were three other Australian prisoners: John MacKay, Jack Davis and Glen Brown. They too met Burchett and Winnington, and being far fitter than the bed-ridden Donnelly, had more to do with the journalists. In mid-December, Donnelly told ASIO that Winnington, on spotting a group of recently repatriated Chinese amputees, had suggested that "UN doctors were cutting off limbs to save themselves the trouble of giving . . . medical treatment", and Burchett agreed. It was the last Donnelly saw of Burchett for 17 years.[59] Unbeknown to Donnelly, Burchett later shared two bottles of American whisky with MacKay, Davis and Brown. ASIO was well aware of this, having interviewed Davis and MacKay in early December. In later years, when Burchett claimed he had assisted Australian prisoners-of-war at Operation Little Switch, Donnelly publicly branded him a liar.[60] By that time, Donnelly's story fitted and, indeed, fuelled the popular perception of Burchett as a traitor who had acted against the interests of Australian prisoners-of-war. MacKay and Davis's accounts, which suggested otherwise, remained securely buried amongst ASIO's files.

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Charles Spry was not only the keeper of the Commonwealth's secrets, but also tailored them to suit his ideological fit. On 17 December he advised Attorney-General Spicer on ASIO's latest findings. Though Spry was not positioned to judge the validity of the claims made in *This Monstrous War* or *Koje Unscreened*, he dismissed them as "propaganda", and so unquestioningly accepted that the germ warfare story was a communist-conspired lie. From this premise, he informed Spicer that Burchett and Winnington had "actively participated in the fabrication of evidence of the use of bacteria by US forces[,] . . . and in the course of such participation . . . seduced prisoners-of war from their duty." Spry seemed convinced that there was enough evidence on which to support a case against Burchett. As he explained to Spicer, Tuck and Hunt had established Burchett had travelled in a "Russian jeep" accompanied by a "driver in a Chinese Army uniform", and had "at times wor[n] a Chinese uniform, but without the insignia of rank or status." Furthermore, Burchett and Winnington were "the first source of information for the United Nations correspondents", and the pair's "statements . . . always proved to be accurate accounts of the communist line."[61] On Spry's own admission, Burchett and Winnington's disclosures were "accurate" enough for UN correspondents and their newspapers. Any propaganda presumably emanated from the so-called concoctors of the "line", and not the journalists. Because the "line" did not suit Spry's ideological fit, he dismissed it, and advised Spicer that Burchett

[59] Statement by Eric Donnelly, 16 December 1953; *ibid*, folios 76A & B.
[60] Statement by John Houston Mackay, 3 December 1953; & John Frederick Davis, 2 December 1953; *ibid*, folios 36-38 & 31-32, respectively.
[61] Memorandum from Colonel Charles Spry to J A Spicer, the Attorney-General, 17 December 1953; *ibid*, folios 52-59.

was a traitor based on the cut of his cloth, the make of his vehicle, and the shade of his driver. They were the flimsiest of pretexts on which to argue a case for prosecution, ignoring whether or not there was any substance to Burchett's side of the story.

By early January 1954, Spry had become more mindful of the case's inadequacies. He told Spicer that although he suspected there was "sufficient" material to establish a *prima facie* case against Burchett, the evidence "on the face of it, was incomplete." As though admitting defeat, Spry mulled over whether the Government should publicise its intention to prosecute Burchett, in order to deter him from entering. But this too posed problems. For starters, Spicer would have to rule "if the facts disclos[ed] an offence against the law of the Commonwealth, [and] . . . arrange the date and place of the trial." As Spry explained to the Attorney-General, the case was not far enough advanced for such an eventuality. Spry also suspected that Burchett had enough "vanity and . . . self-confidence" to ignore the Government's deterrent. Fancifully, Spry mooted that the Chinese communists "might instruct [Burchett] to accept the challenge", sacrificing him to highlight "the lack of freedom in the western press." Furthermore, from the establishment's point of view, an effective political trial required a verdict that justified its order by damning those in the dock. Without these sureties, Spry was not prepared to risk the possibility of Burchett being acquitted or cast as a martyr. Acquittal, he implored, "would be a useful public victory for communism." As he stated to Spicer, "it m[ight] be considered better that Burchett remain[ed] away from Australia, than he return[ed] here and [was] acquitted by a criminal court." Hence, suitable impediments, such as the spectre of prosecution, should be used to discourage him "from coming within the reach of the law."[62]

However, there was still a slim possibility of obtaining weightier evidence. Claude Batchelor was another of the 23 UN prisoners who had decided against repatriation, but like Dickenson had changed his mind at the last moment. On 5 January Spry informed the Defence Secretary, Frederick Shedden, that Batchelor was "likely to be in a position to speak of Burchett's activities among UN POWs."[63] Defence, in turn, cabled Wells in Tokyo, requesting that FEC's interrogation of Batchelor should include "matters" relating to Burchett.[64]

On 7 January Joe Carusi questioned Batchelor. According to Carusi's report, Batchelor claimed to have "something of a personal friendship with [Burchett]", despite only meeting him on six occasions. Apparently, Batchelor alleged that Burchett had asked him to prepare a petition critical of American activities in Korea, and had orchestrated the statement issued by the non-repatriates, disclosing their reasons for rejecting the West in favour of communism. Carusi's report also suggested that Burchett had participated in the "extensive interrogation of Air Force captured personnel for the sole purpose of extracting false information", and had "visited all communist prison camps, performing

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[62] Memorandum from Colonel Charles Spry to Attorney-General Spicer, 8 January 1954; *ibid*, folios 87-90.
[63] Memorandum from Colonel Charles Spry to the Secretary, the Department of Defence, Frederick Shedden, 5 January 1954; *ibid*, folio 81.
[64] Cable from Defence Melbourne to Britcom Japan; *ibid*, folio 85.

propaganda duties for the Chinese." With Winnington, he had cleared "all press releases from General Headquarters", and was "justly considered the official mouthpiece of the Peoples' Government of North Korea." He had also "directed" the liaison between Communist headquarters and the northern camps. Given the infrequency of Batchelor's meetings with Burchett, not to forget his lowly prisoner-of-war status, it was most unlikely he could substantiate all - if any - of the allegations contained in Carusi's report. Perhaps Batchelor, by muddying Burchett's name, had hoped to endear himself to US military authorities. On his return to the US, Batchelor was charged with being an "enemy agent" and sentenced to life imprisonment. Of the 74 American prisoners who were found to have collaborated with the communists, Batchelor's penalty was the stiffest.[65]

ASIO did not act on Carusi's report. Though Spry still mulled over the possibility of prosecuting Burchett, neither he nor Spicer were willing to chance the case in court.[66] Instead, the Menzies Government employed the threat of prosecution to ward the journalist off and, in doing so, augmented the myth of 'Burchett the traitor'.

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The real Wilfred, of course, was a traveller, a crosser of divides and chronicler of the other side. In March 1954 he crossed from China into the misty, densely forested, Vietminh-held hills of Viet-Bac, north of Hanoi. For eight years the Vietminh had fought the French, guided by Ho Chi Minh and marshalled by General Vo Nyugen Giap. Wilfred had been asked to cover their side of the story by the London *Daily Worker*.

Twelve months earlier, the American *Daily Worker's* Joseph Starobin had trudged into the Vietminh's mountain base in Viet-Bac, and interviewed the elusive Ho and Giap.[67] The General was elsewhere when Wilfred called, but Ho was in. As Wilfred recalled, Ho walked from "the jungle shadow unannounced . . . with a long bamboo stick, [and] sun helmet worn high over his brown face." It was a "kindly face", and he had a warm and simple manner, and "exceptional intelligence", all of which captivated Wilfred. Radio reports had mentioned a major battle in the isolated mountain valley of Diem Bien Phu, and Wilfred asked Ho about it. Ho explained that the French, under the leadership of General Henri Navarre, had airlifted 16,000 troops, with tanks and artillery, into the valley during the preceding November. From the valley, Navarre had intended to launch attacks on the Vietminh's rear, thereby diverting its attention from the strategically vital Red River Delta and Hanoi. But Giap had ringed the valley with 6 artillery regiments and an engineering corps, which had tunnelled towards the French. On 25 January, Giap had attacked. To explain the French predicament, Ho removed his sun-helmet and turned it upside-down. Inside the helmet, he explained, were the French, trapped by the Vietnamese Peoples Army (VPA) which was entrenched around the rim. He then placed the helmet

[65] J S Carusi's confidential memorandum entitled, "Information re Wilfred Burchett and Alan Winnington", 1 February 1954; *ibid*, folios 93-96.
[66] See the secret memorandum entitled "W G Burchett", 10 February 1954; *ibid*, folios 99-105.
[67] See David Marr's "Burchett on Vietnam", in Ben Kiernan (ed) *op cit*, pp 214-215.

on his head, wished Wilfred "good health", and after "a final wave was swallowed up by the jungle."[68] Perhaps, for a moment, Ho and the jungle seemed organically one to Wilfred.

For six weeks Wilfred trekked through Vietminh-controlled Vietnam, noting the movement's peasant roots and its brotherly bonds with the bordering Free Khmer and Pathet Lao.[69] He celebrated the Vietminh raid on the French air base at Gia Lam, on Hanoi's outskirts, and Navarre's ill-fated attempts to escape Diem Bien Phu. He also condemned America's substantial bolstering of the French and their Vietnamese puppet, Bao Dai. But he failed to comment on the sizeable support that the Vietminh received from Communist China. Since the Korean armistice, the Chinese had trucked, monthly, 4000 tons of equipment and 2000 tons of food into Viet-Bac.[70] Indeed, it was primarily Chinese equipment that ringed the hills around Diem Bien Phu. Perhaps Wilfred was too blinkered by the notion of an organic war to notice China's stamp on the stockpiles.

By late April, Wilfred was rattling across the Soviet Union on the Trans-Siberian Railway. He was bound for Geneva. With France's troops battered and near-beaten, its people weary of war, and its allies - bar elements within the Eisenhower Administration - unwilling to intercede on its behalf, the French Prime Minister, Joseph Laniel, sought diplomatically to salvage his political stocks and a portion of his country's Indo-Chinese past. Hence, the major powers, along with the warring parties, were assembling in Geneva to discuss not only the Indo-Chinese war, but also its Korean counterpart. Alan Winnington had intended to cover the conference for the London *Daily Worker*. The British Counsel in Peking, however, had impounded Winnington's passport, apparently on instructions from the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden.[71] It marked the end of Burchett and Winnington's collaboration, and the commencement of the latter's exile.

Another relationship, however, was about to be revived. Shortly after Wilfred's arrival, Erna and Rainer confronted him in a Geneva street. She had come from London to re-acquaint her son with his father. Ranier never knew if the meeting had been jointly arranged or was solely of Erna's doing, though he suspected the latter. He remembered the hurt on being told of his father's marriage to Vessa, and the arrival of his stepbrother, Peter, in May 1953. It added a edge to his love for Wilfred. He was never 'Dad' to Rainer, always "Wilfred."[72]

At the *Palais des Nations* the past was also coming back to bite the French and their brokers, the Americans; or so it seemed. The American delegation was led by the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, supported by his Under-secretary, Walter Bedell Smith. They were against the

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[68] Wilfred Burchett, *North of the 17th Parallel*, pp 2-5.
[69] Wilfred Burchett, "Inside People's Viet Nam - The Truth", the London *Daily Worker*, 12 April 1954.
[70] Wilfred Burchett, "A Great Disaster for the French Army, *ibid*, 31 March 1954; & "Trying to Make a Desert", *ibid;* NAA6119/XR1, item 14, folios 130-131. See also Wilfred Burchett, *North of the 17th Parallel*, p 67. See also Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam; A History*, p 209.
[71] See "Govt. seizes Alan Winnington's Passport", which presumably appeared in the London *Daily Worker* in March 1954. The article appears in NAA6119/XR1, item 14, folio 135.
[72] Conversation with Rainer Burchett, London, 30 June 1999.

conference, considering that a negotiated settlement threatened the containment of communism. On the signing of the armistice in Korea, Dulles had urged the French not to bargain with the Vietminh. He even offered the French a $500 million incentive, which they gratefully pocketed.[73] Indeed, since 1950, the Truman and Eisenhower administrations had given the French $3.6 billion in military aid to stem communism's thrust into Indo-China. Therefore, it was no surprise to find Dulles and Vice-President Richard Nixon lobbying Congress to approve the plan by the chair of US joint chiefs-of-staff, Admiral Arthur Radford, for air strikes on Diem Bien Phu. It was also no surprise to find Dulles in London, calling on the Churchill Government for military assistance to save the French. But Churchill "was not prepared to give any undertakings . . . in advance of the results of Geneva." [74] Thus, the Americans arrived in Geneva, inclined to fight rather than negotiate with the communists.

Wilfred was exceedingly conscious of this and, once again, turned his pen on the Americans. Dulles represented all that Wilfred loathed about America and capitalism. He was a corporate lawyer for starters. He was also the President of the World Council of Churches, and "a warmonger" and "imperialist bully", who "cloak[ed his] crimes against humanity in moral and religious phrases." He was not interested in a negotiated settlement, but in marshalling more "men, arms and weapons [for] . . . a new war of intervention in Indo China." During the conference's early days, Wilfred heard that Dulles had sought, unsuccessfully, further French forces and a British contingent. His only takers, Wilfred found, were his "chief errand boy", the Australian Foreign Minister, Richard Casey, and the irascible Sygnman Rhee. According to Wilfred, they and Dulles belonged to a "putrefying and moribund" order, condemned by history's changing tide.[75]

On 7 May Diem Bien Phu fell, heralding the beginning of the end for the French in Indo-China. The fall coincided with the arrival of the Vietminh delegation in Geneva, led by Pham Van Dong. He had not been initially invited, ruled unacceptable by the head of the French delegation, Georges Bidault. But Diem Bien Phu changed that. To Wilfred, Pham was a liberator and not an enslaver of Asians, a source of goodness and enlightenment. Perhaps it was this tendency to accept without question communism's moral superiority, which left Wilfred blind to Geneva's best kept secret.

On 17 June the Laniel Government fell, and Pierre Mendes-France, a strident critic of the war, took office and pledged to achieve a settlement within four weeks or resign. The following day Dulles left Geneva, and Wilfred wrote that he looked like "a man who had lost a desperate gamble."[76] But Dulles was not the Conference's only loser - if indeed he was at all. Wilfred rightly noted that Pham had come to Geneva powerfully placed, courtesy of Diem Bien Phu. However, Wilfred mistakenly suggested that Pham, in accepting the partition of Vietnam, displayed "modesty[,] . . . delicacy [and] .

[73] Stanley Karnow, *op cit*, p 208.
[74] Gabriel Kolko, *Vietnam: Anatomy of a War*, pp 81 & 212-214.
[75] Wilfred Burchett, *North of the 17th Parallel*, pp 73-74 & 77-78.
[76] *Ibid* pp 77-78.

. generosity" in his treatment of the French.[77] In actuality, Pham was against partitioning. It was the preferred option of China's Chou En-lai and Mendes-France.

With China's domestic economy tottering after the failure of the Great Leap Forward, Chou utilised the Conference to establish a rapport with the West, and keep the Americans from his country's borders. He realised that the war had exhausted the Vietminh's reserves, thereby increasing their reliance on Chinese aid. He also realised that the Americans were a greater danger to China than the French. So as the Americans would have no cause to intervene in Indo-China, Chou pressured the Vietminh into moderating their demands. Indeed, threats of intervention by Dulles and Bedell Smith increased Chou's efforts to sway the Vietnamese. In May, he had told Ho that the Vietminh could not expect further assistance unless it accepted partitioning. On 21 July all parties agreed that Vietnam was to be partitioned along the 17th Parallel, with elections to be held to unify the country in July 1956. Though Bedell Smith did not sign the Agreement on behalf of the US, he stated his country's intention to abide by it. As a consequence, the US halted communism at the 17th Parallel, while the Vietminh relinquished two-thirds of the territory it had secured in battle. Pham left Geneva, privately uttering that Chou had "double-crossed" him.[78] It was this side of the conference that Wilfred missed.

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Shortly after his arrival in Geneva, Wilfred claimed Swiss police had raided his hotel room and rummaged through his travel documents. As they were in order, Wilfred was allowed to go about his business. But he noticed that other journalists were not. Apparently, in the bars and lounges where correspondents congregated, so too did "special teams of FBI and McCarthy spies and pimps." Within a week, the bars had emptied of American journalists, and one later confided to Wilfred that he could not be seen talking with left-wing colleagues.[79] Of course, such observations might be thought the inventions of a hunted mind, but perhaps there was more to them than even Wilfred imagined.

Five days before the Geneva Agreement was signed, FEC, *via* the Australian Embassy in Tokyo, had requested permission from the Menzies Government to discredit Burchett. FEC wanted to declassify a "confidential United States Army Intelligence report." It alleged that Burchett and Winnington had not only "exceeded their duties as bona-fide newspaper correspondents", but had also acted as "official spokesmen" for the North Korean and Chinese governments, with the "status and duties . . . [of] a high ranking Political Officer or Commissar." They had assisted the Chinese in extorting, drafting and editing the germ warfare confessions, and "[m]asterminded . . . the appearance of the fliers before the International Scientific Commission (ISC)."[80] Bolstering FEC's request were "extracts from sworn testimonies" given by Enoch, O'Neal, Kniss and Quinn. At a glance, they appeared damning indictments of the journalists' treachery. Enoch, for instance, stated that he had told

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[77] *Ibid*, p 94.
[78] Jean Lacouture, *Ho Chi Minh*, p 153. Pham's remark was cited by Karnow, *op cit*, p 220..
[79] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 96.
[80] "Top secret cablegram" from the Australian Embassy, Tokyo, to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 16 July 1954; NAA 6119/XR1, item 15, folio 21.

Burchett his confession was "a fraud." For his trouble, he "was forced to sit upright on a stool for five days", during which he was "threatened repeatedly with drastic measures by Burchett." O'Neal and Quinn made similar allegations, while Kniss contended that Burchett had doctored his confession, inserting "ideas" that were not the airman's own.[81]

As the report was intended to discredit rather than convict the journalists, the establishment of truth was secondary to the imperatives of propaganda. None of the airmen could be accused of lying, yet all had dramatically altered their stories by mid-1954. In the sworn statements they had tended to US military interrogators at Parks Air Force Base in mid-September 1953, all had renounced their confessions as lies, extracted under physical and psychological duress by Chinese interrogators. There was no mention that Burchett or Winnington had played any part. Kniss, for example, stated that "the Chinese Communists" had contrived his confession, as well as his testimony before the ISC. Burchett was not mentioned at all. Indeed, of the ten sworn statements forwarded to ASIO, only Walker Mahurin's mentioned Winnington, in passing, while Burchett was totally absent from all.[82] They were curious omissions given the prominence both were later accorded.

With the signing of the Geneva Agreement, FEC had another agenda. The Americans were keen to bolster South Vietnam against communism under Ngo Dinh Diem, and work towards transforming the country's temporary partition into a permanent one. In mid-1954, the CIA reported that the Vietminh, barring mishaps, would "certainly win" Vietnam-wide elections in 1956.[83] In order to secure the South from communism, US military authorities sought to circumvent the elections, and tarnish the reputations of those, like Burchett and Winnington, who might put the communist side of the story. US military had received reports that the pair "[were] now operating in Indo-China." Fearing they would again prove troublesome, the US Army's Psychological Warfare Section was "anxious" to declassify the statements of Enoch, O'Neal, Quinn and Kniss; and use excerpts from them "in broadcasts, pamphlets and other propaganda aimed at discrediting [Burchett and Winnington]."[84] Mindful of the Menzies Government's touchiness about Burchett, FEC sought its permission.

It was obviously attractive to the Government, which had been returned on 29 May amidst furore over the Petrov defection and the establishment of a subsequent Royal Commission to weed out

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[81] "Communist Intelligence and Propaganda Activities of Wilfred G Burchett and Allan Winnington", *ibid*, folios 27-31. For a contrary view see details of Enoch's interview with Burchett, in the presence of the French World Peace Council's President, Yves Farge, the French academic, Claude Roy, see *Documentation on Bacteriological Warfare*, Bulletin 18, 14 June 1952; folder 42, Needham Papers, IWM.

[82] See the sworn statements of Lt Kenneth Enoch, 23 September 1953, Parkes Air Force Base (California); Lt Floyd B O'Neal, 23 September 1953, Parkes Air Force Base (California); Lt Paul R Kniss, 23 September 1953, Parkes Air Force Base (California); Lt John S Quinn, Parkes Air Force, 23 September 1953; NAA1838/370, item 852/20/4/114 RTS folios 246, 235, 236 & 237 respectively. Also included in the file are statements from Lt Francis A Strieby (folios 251-252), Lt James L Stanley (folios 250-249), Colonel Walker M Mahurin (folios 244-247), Colonel Andrew J Evans (folios 242-243), Major Roy H Bley (folios 232-234) and Colonel Frank H Schwable (folios 227-230).

[83] Cited by Gabrriel Kolko, *op cit*, p 85.

[84] "Top secret cablegram" dated 16 July 1954, *op cit*.

communists. Given the Government's anti-communist crusade, and its failure to mount a case against Burchett, and restrict his activities and movements, it undoubtedly welcomed the opportunity to tarnish him, his ilk and their causes. Though still not entirely certain, the Department of Immigration suspected that Burchett held a British passport. As a precaution against its automatic renewal, the Australian Government in May instructed British authorities that "no further passport facilities should be granted to [Burchett] without reference to the Foreign Office."[85] Furthermore, on 7 April ASIO had recommended that Burchett's name be added to the Passport Warning List.[86] By late April, Immigration had instructed consular posts that "any application by Burchett for a travel document of any kind should be refused outright, without any prior reference to this office."[87] But such measures had not overly hampered Burchett's movements or stifled his voice, and so the Government stooped to smearing him

FEC's request was referred to Spry who "had nothing against the declassification of the report."[88] On 29 July the Tokyo Embassy was instructed to advise the Americans that the Government had no objection, though care should be taken not to "provoke comment prejudicial to American-Australia relationships."[89] Later Spry asked the Embassy for a copy of the report, which he received on 10 August.[90] He also received copies of the sworn statements, which the airmen had tendered in mid-September 1953. Those were filed away, whilst the report was released for public consumption, ensuring that the lie of the 'traitor' lived on.

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In early October Wilfred again crossed the border from China into Vietnam. On this occasion, he was bound for Hanoi, to cover the transition of power from the French to the Vietminh. As he travelled southwards, he noticed French soldiers standing on the roadside, "savage" and "inglorious", their "powerful tanks, armoured cars [and] artillery pieces", silent and defeated.[91] He also noticed the VPA's "slim, slightly equipped troops", whose "superior morale" had overcome French technological

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[85] See the secret memorandum from D L Nutt, the Assistant Secretary of the Department of Immigration, to the Director-General, D Branch, Attorney-General's Department, Melbourne, Undated, NAA 6890/6, item 200614, folio 52.
[86] See Consular Circular No. 15 to all consular posts, 7 April 1954. The Consular Circular is mentioned in the secret Department of Immigration memorandum from the Assistant Secretary, A L Nutt to "All Posts", 3 May 1954: *ibid*, folio 54.
[87] See *ibid.*
[88] Memorandum entitled "Comments by the Director-General of Security on Tokyo telegram 238 of 16 July 1954", 22 July 1954, NAA 6119/XR1, item 15, folio 20.
[89] Secret cablegram from the Department of External Affairs to the Australian Embassy, Tokyo, 27 July 1954, *ibid*, folio 22. The External Affairs officer responsible for the dispatch of the cable was Keith Waller, who later lobbied within the department for the return of Wilfred's passport. See folio 23.
[90] Confidential memorandum entitled "Communist Intelligence & Propaganda Activities of W C (sic) Burchett and Alan Winnington", *ibid*, folios 27-31. The officer responsible for sending the report to ASIO was Keith Waller. See the secret memorandum from J K Waller, Assistant Secretary, Department of External Affairs to the Regional Director, 'D' Branch, Attorney-General's Department, Canberra, 10 August 1954; *ibid*, folio 33.
[91] Wilfred Burchett, *North of the 17th Parallel*, pp 108-109.

might.[92] As he watched them march towards Hanoi, Wilfred no doubt thought he was on the right side of history, and that peoples' democracy would eventually sweep colonialism and capitalism aside.

In Hanoi, he watched the city's 308th Division marched through the streets. Many of its soldiers had left Hanoi in 1946 and had not returned until now. Wilfred remembered it as "a day of tears and cheers, of laughter and weeping, of emotional reunion and abrupt departure." The soldiers knew that the fight was not over until all Vietnam was "liberated and united", which they "willingly accepted in a proud disciplined way"; so, they renounced today to "enjoy tomorrow." Wilfred was now part of their struggle. He too "had also to push on", forsaking family and home to further the cause.[93] For his enemies it was a sign of treachery, while for his supporters it was an act of nobility.

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Being an Australian diplomat of Chinese descendent, Charles Lee was a rarity. During the early 1940s he had served under Eggleston in Chungking, where he had first met Wilfred. In April 1955 Lee was stationed at the Australian Embassy in Djakarta, and during the Afro-Asian Conference in nearby Bandung renewed his acquaintanceship with Wilfred. The Conference was to be a showpiece of the burgeoning non-aligned movement, where the likes of Sukarno, Nehru and Chou En-lai could vent their views on decolonisation and peaceful co-existence. The Menzies Government viewed the Conference with some trepidation, but Wilfred embraced it, so it was no surprise to find him and Lee chatting over cups of coffee in the pressroom.

Lee found Burchett "amiable and . . . willing to pass on . . . what information he had about the Conference." He seemed removed from the Chinese delegation, Lee noted, but had intimated that "he . . . [was] act[ing] as an official adviser to the Vietminh Government on press and information problems." Lee also noticed that Burchett "appeared to be nervous[,] . . . constantly look[ing] around as if he was afraid someone might attack him." Obviously, Lee was unaware of the circumstances surrounding Wilfred's flight to Bandung.[94]

He had originally intended to fly from Hong Kong on an aircraft chartered by the Chinese delegation. However, the North Vietnamese had also chartered an aircraft and, as Wilfred was in Hanoi, he decided to travel with them. During a stopover for refuelling in Singapore - still under British control - the authorities had briefly seized his passport, but returned it shortly before his aircraft departed. Wilfred suspected that the Menzies Government had initiated the seizure. Perhaps it was in Singapore, though more than likely it was on his arrival in Djakarta, where he heard that the Chinese plane, on which he had originally intended to travel, had exploded shortly after leaving Hong Kong, killing several of his close colleagues. "It was a grievous shock", he lamented to George.[95] Later,

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[92] *Ibid*, pp 109 & 113.
[93] *Ibid*, pp 113-114.
[94] Memorandum entitled "Conversation with Wilfred Burchett", by Charles Lee, Counsellor, the Australian Embassy, Djakarta, 4 May 1955; NAA 6980/6, item 200614, folio 148.
[95] Letter form Wilfred to George Burchett, 23 April 1955, BP SLV.

Wilfred was told that a *Kuomintang* agent, intending to assassinate Chou En-lai, had planted a "time bomb" on board.[96] Wilfred eventually arrived in Bandung, "very much to the surprise and sorrow of many people." His old foes, Warner and McDonald, were there and had apparently "tried to organise a boycott of [him]." It failed, and Wilfred gloated to George, "I had more dinners and luncheon engagements than I could fulfil."[97] But, as Lee noted to Canberra, Burchett seemed oddly on edge.

His world was beginning to shrink. As he explained to George, "very strong efforts will be made in the future to prevent me coming to such conferences." He had been "warned" by colleagues to by-pass Hong Kong and Singapore on his return to Hanoi. Rumours were apparently rife that pressure was being placed on "the British authorities to confiscate [his] passport."[98] Hence, he returned *via* Rangoon to Kunming with the Chinese delegation, after which he cut across China to Hanoi.

Rainer remembered that his father always lost things.[99] On 2 May 1955, he lost his British passport. Wilfred suspected *Kuomintang* agents had stolen it as he "lunched" in a guesthouse at Dong Dang on the Vietnamese side of its border with China. Given recent events, it was an understandable suspicion.[100] On his arrival in Hanoi, Wilfred immediately reported the "loss" to the British Consul-General, G H Baker. Baker had been expecting Wilfred's call, aware that his passport was about to expire. Its loss merely expedited the institution of long-considered measures, which would further shrink Wilfred's world.

In August 1954, Baker had been discreetly warned that Burchett would be visiting Hanoi in October for the transition of power to the Vietminh, and might seek to renew his passport.[101] The British requested instructions from the Australian Embassy in Saigon, which in turn referred the matter to the Department of Immigration in Canberra.[102] Immigration's acting Secretary, A L Nutt, was mindful that the Government had no say over the issue of British travel documents. He advised Holt that the Department's sole interest was Burchett's eligibility to hold an Australian passport. Nonetheless, Nutt added, the British should be advised that Burchett, as an Australian citizen, was not entitled to a British passport; and, furthermore, as he was on the Australian Government's Passport Warning List, he was barred from holding an Australian passport. However, Nutt did suggest that the Consul "m[ight] be informed that Burchett [wa]s eligible to return to Australia."[103] This was far too inviting for the Minister's liking. On 9 October, the Australian Legation in Saigon was baldly

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[96] See Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p 279-281.
[97] Letter form Wilfred to George Burchett, *op cit*.
[98] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 280.
[99] Author's conversation with Rainer Burchett, 30 June 1999.
[100] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, pp 280-281; & *At the Barricades*, p 10.
[101] See the secret cablegram, marked "priority" from Rowland, the Australian Legation, Saigon to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 6 October, 1954; NAA *op cit*, folio 91.
[102] Secret cablegram from Rowland, the Australian Legation, Saigon, to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 8 October 1954, *ibid*, folio 96.
[103] Secret memorandum entitled "Wilfred Graham Burchett", undated; *ibid*, folio 93.

instructed to advise its British counterpart in Hanoi that Burchett was not to be issued with a passport. The Australian Legation's cable neglected to mention Burchett's right to return home.[104]

In April 1955, the British Embassy in Djakarta, on learning that Burchett would be attending the Afro-Asian Conference, made a similar request to the Australian Government.[105] As a consequence, Immigration's Secretary, Sir Tasman Heyes, broached the matter in a submission to Holt. Heyes rightly contended that Burchett, as an Australian, could "return", but was not entitled to a British passport. He reminded Holt that the Foreign Office had instructed British consular posts in April 1954 that "Burchett should not be granted further UK passport facilities." Therefore, Heyes argued, if Burchett approached the British Embassy in Djakarta for a renewal of his passport, his request would inevitably be refused, prompting him to "seek immediately an Australian passport from our Embassy", which "could prove . . . exceedingly difficult and embarrassing for our Australian representative in Indonesia." As the matter was ultimately an Australian and not a British concern, Heyes asked the Minister to consider whether Burchett should be refused an Australian passport, or issued with a document of identity or passport of limited duration, restricted to entry into Australia.[106]

On 12 May the Australian High Commission in London informed External Affairs in Canberra that the British Government had decided Burchett was not entitled to British residency or citizenship. Baker in Hanoi had been promptly advised, as had the Australian Legation in Saigon.[107] Burchett, as Heyes had predicted, was now solely the concern of the Australian Government. Based on ASIO's findings, Heyes considered Burchett undeserving of a passport. Solicitor-General Bailey agreed, though he suggested that Burchett might be offered "facilities to return to Australia only if such a procedure was available." Surprisingly, Spry concurred. He was mindful that the Government should not "do anything which m[ight] be considered as condoning . . . [Burchett's] activities as a propagandist for the communists." A passport, Spry argued, would not only "facilitate Burchett's movements as an Australian", but also create an impression that he was "ostensibly . . . an independent observer" of international events. But Spry was in favour of granting Burchett a document of identity valid only for re-entry into Australia. Perhaps he still had hopes of luring Burchett into the dock.[108]

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[104] Secret cablegram from the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, to the Australian Legation, Saigon, 9 October 1954; *ibid*, folio 97.

[105] See the secret cablegram from the Australia Embassy, Djakarta, to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 18 April 1955; *ibid*, folio 113..

[106] Secret submission entitled "Wilfred Graham Burchett - Passport" from the Secretary of the Department of Immigration, T H E Heyes, to the Minister for Immigration, 20 April 1954; *ibid*, folios 127-128.

[107] Cablegram from the Australian High Commission, London, to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 11 May 1955; *ibid*, folio 136. See also the confidential letter from G H Baker, the British Consul-General, Hanoi to David W McNicol, the Australian Legation, Saigon, 19 May 1955; *ibid*, folio 152.

[108] See the secret memorandum from the Secretary, Department of Immigration, T H E Heyes, to the Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, Alan Brown, 13 May 1955; *ibid*, folios 138-139. See also the secret and personal memorandum from the Solicitor-General, Sir Kenneth Bailey, to the Secretary of the Department of Immigration, Sir Tasman Heyes, 12 May 1955, *ibid*, folio 132.

Menzies and his departmental Secretary, Alan Brown, were also taking a keen interest in the matter. On 13 May Heyes had told Brown of the British decision. Heyes knew that the "Prime Minister had been watching . . . this case" and on Holt's behalf asked Brown about Menzies' "intended course of action."[109] Brown responded that the Prime Minister had "directed that . . . no documents which would in any way ease [Burchett's] return to Australia should be given."[110] Menzies, not content with refusing Burchett a passport, sought to dissuade him from returning to Australia. Despite touting Burchett as a traitor, the Government had neither the moral will nor the legal wherewithal to prosecute him, and so effectively sought to bar him and his family from Australia. All overseas posts were again advised that Burchett was not to be issued with travel documents of any kind.[111]

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In the Government's eyes, alleged traitors like Burchett had surrendered their right to be considered Australian citizens, so measures - quasi-legal or otherwise - which curtailed their activities were countenanced. On 10 May 1955, George Burchett was born in Hanoi. As there was no Australian diplomatic representative in the city, Wilfred approached Baker at the British Legation about registering George and Wilfred's first-born, Peter, as Australian citizens. Wilfred explained that Peter's birth had been registered at the Bulgarian Embassy in Peking in 1953, but not with either British or Australian authorities. Baker referred the matter to the Australian Legation in Saigon, which forwarded it onto Canberra.[112]

On 18 May Brown and Menzies, after discussing the matter, sought Heyes' advice. Heyes was mindful that under Section II of the *Nationality and Citizenship Act*, a child who was born outside Australia of an Australian father, and whose birth had been registered at an Australian Embassy within 12 months, was entitled to citizenship. If circumstances conspired against the registration being completed within the proscribed period, the Minister, at his discretion, was empowered to act on the child's behalf. However, as Heyes related to Brown, when the *Act* was being drafted, the Parliamentary Drafting Committee had been "instructed that the Minister wished to have power to refuse citizenship to non-Europeans who were not eligible under immigration policy to settle in Australia." Hence, *Citizenship Regulation* 6 (3) was devised. It stated - in part - that the "births of any persons . . . who ha[d] been declared by order of the Minister to be ineligible for admission to Australia for permanent residence, and any certificate of registration of births abroad issued in respect of any such person or persons . . . shall be of no force or effect." Heyes mooted that it "gave the Minister very much wider

[109] Memorandum from Heyes to Brown, *ibid.*
[110] Secret memorandum from the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, A S Brown, to T H E Heyes, the Secretary, Department of Immigration, 19 May 1955; *ibid*, folio 147.
[111] Secret memorandum from T H E Heyes, the Secretary of the Department of Immigration, to the Secretary, Department of Prime Minister, 18 May 1955; *ibid*, folios 145-146.
[112] Cablegram from G H Baker, the British Consul-General, Hanoi, to David W McNicoll, the Australian Legation, 17 May 1955, *ibid*, folios 167-168. Cablegram from McNicol, the Australian Legation, Saigon, to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 19 May 1955. *ibid*, folio 152.

power than was necessary . . . [to control] the registration of not only non-Europeans but also children of European descent", and so might be enforceable against Burchett's sons.[113]

But Heyes had serious misgivings about the breadth of the *Regulation's* powers in relation to the *Act*, and the wisdom of using them in this matter. He argued that the *Regulation* contravened the intention of Section 11 of the *Act*. Nonetheless, the "validity" of the *Regulation* was not under contention here, only whether it - in itself - gave the Minister the power to refuse registration. Heyes urged the Government to tread cautiously, suggesting that a refusal "will not serve any good purpose since clearly the children will not come here for some time at least if the parents are unable to do so." Refusal, he warned, might be construed as "penalising the children for the actions of their father."[114]

Heyes had sought clarification - presumably from within his Department - on the limitations of the *Regulation* in regard to Section II of the *Act*. On 19 May he was informed that that the powers within the *Act* were "mandatory", and so prevailed over those contained in the *Regulation*, rendering the latter's "open to an attack on the grounds of invalidity." Furthermore, Heyes was advised that even if a challenge against the *Regulation* proved unsuccessful, its "propriety . . . could be subject to adverse criticism." Indeed, Heyes' confidant warned, "the less said in defence of the *Regulation* . . . the better for the prestige of the Department." Heyes was also warned that young George Burchett had "an absolute right" to be registered as an "Australian citizen by descent", if the conditions of the *Act* were fulfilled within the proscribed period.[115]

In early July Menzies asked Heyes if the *Regulation* could be employed against Burchett's children. On this occasion, Heyes sought out Bailey's advice.[116] He argued that the *Regulation* was "inconsistent" with the *Act*, because it introduced "a Ministerial discretion not provided for by . . . Section [II]." Under the latter, registration was a "right" which the *Regulation* had no power to limit. If "proceedings" were instituted to require the registration of a child, who had fulfilled the *Act's* criteria, Bailey could not "hold out any hope that . . . a refusal . . . [w]ould be validly supported."[117]

On 5 August, Heyes forwarded Bailey's advice onto Brown.[118] Menzies, at the time, was acting as Attorney-General, and had noticed that two years had elapsed since Peter Burchett's birth. According to Bailey, Menzies "suggested that steps should be taken to make sure that the

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[113] See the secret and personal memorandum from the Secretary, Department of Immigration, T H E Heyes, to the Secretary, Department of Prime Minister, Alan Brown, 18 May 1955, *ibid*, folios 150-151.
[114] *Ibid.*
[115] Memorandum to the Secretary entitled "Section 11 of the *Nationality & Citizenship Act*", 19 May 1955; *ibid*; folios 142-143.
[116] See the secret memorandum from T H E Heyes, the Secretary, Department of Immigration, to the Solicitor-General, Sir Kenneth Bailey, 11 July 1955; *ibid*, folios 159-160.
[117] Memorandum entitled "Registration of children abroad of Australian citizens", from the Solicitor-General, Sir K H Bailey to T H E Heyes, the Secretary, Department of Immigration, 1 August 1955; *ibid*, folios 173-175.
[118] Letter from T H E Heyes, the Secretary, Department of Immigration, to Alan Brown, the Secretary, Department of Prime Minister, 5 August 1955; folio 176.

[Immigration] Minister does not allow any extended period for registration."[119] In October, Heyes, on Bailey's advice, informed Holt that the registration of Peter's birth "[was] not now compulsory" but might be granted "if the Minister allow[ed]." Heyes also warned, "there [wa]s no legal doubt that the registration of Burchett's younger child within twelve months after its occurrence . . . could not be withheld if Burchet· applied for registration." Following further discussions with Menzies, however, it was ruled that "authority was to be withheld for the registration of the births of both children."[120] In spite of advice to the contrary, Menzies had decided that George, on the lodgement of an application for the registration of his birth, should be denied his legal entitlement to become an Australian citizen. The Prime Minister, as acting Attorney-General, was prepared to become a law unto himself, to keep the Burchetts out.

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The radical journalist, historian, and civil libertarian, Brian Fitzpatrick, was well known to the Burchett family. In 1953 he had written the 'Foreword' for *He Chose Truth*, in which he called Wilfred "Australia's most distinguished war correspondent" and a chronicler of "the truth."[121] As General Secretary of the Australian Council for Civil Liberties (ACCL), Fitzpatrick was again summoned to defend Wilfred's honour in October 1955. On 3 October Wilfred had written to his father, George, from Peking, telling of the theft of his passport, and the Australian Government's refusal to grant him another. He also mentioned that he had approached the British Consul-General in Hanoi about registering his "new child" as an Australian citizen, and was still waiting on a reply. To hurry matters along, he asked George to request assistance from Fitzpatrick and the ACCL.[122]

In a quirk of the Cold War, Fitzpatrick and Holt were acquainted. They exchanged Christmas cards, and sent each other occasional messages of encouragement. When Fitzpatrick detailed Wilfred's grievances to the Immigration Minister in late October, he might have harboured hopes of a sympathetic hearing. Fitzpatrick emphasised that "Burchett [wa]s Australian-born, of Australian parents, [and] known to me as a respectable person"; and though his "public opinions and activities . . . [were] not in accord of the present Commonwealth Government", they were "quite irrelevant in [the] context of passports and the registration of births." Holt promptly assured that he would "examine the matter", and advise Fitzpatrick "as soon as [he was] in a position to do so."[123] But Heyes had advised Holt to wait on "Burchett before taking further action."[124] Both had not the slightest inclination to act

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[119] Heyes to Brown, *op cit*, 1 August 1955.
[120] Memorandum from T H E Heyes, the Secretary, Department of Immigration to the Minister, 25 October 1955, *ibid*, folios 182-184.
[121] Brian Fitzpatrick, "Foreword" in *He Chose Truth - The Inspiring Story of Wilfred Burchett* by a Fellow Journalist, pp 5-6.
[122] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 3 October 1955, BP SLV.
[123] Letter from Brian Fitzpatrick, the General Secretary, Australian Council for Civil Liberties to Harold Holt, the Minister for Immigration, 25 October 1955; NAA 6980/6, item 200614, folio 181. See Holt's response to Fitzpatrick, 28 October 1955, *ibid*, folio 185 and BPC Papers, MU.
[124] See the handwritten note from T H E Heyes to Harold McGinness, 16 October 1955, NAA *ibid*, folio 180.

unless pushed. Heyes also informed the Minister that the Government's position concerning the registration of Burchett's younger son was legally indefensible.[125]

Throughout the following months, the Government, wary that Burchett might be plotting an unexpected return, closely monitored his movements. The Australian Embassy in Phnom Penh informed External Affairs that Burchett was currently travelling on a "Cambodian *laissez-passer*" document, and had been granted a similar one by the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam (DRVN). It was during this period that an important figure entered Burchett's life. Wilfred never met Harold McGinness, an earnest Assistant Secretary with the Department of Immigration, and the bureaucrat primarily responsible for keeping him at bay in subsequent years. McGinness came to prominence in March 1956. The Olympic Games were scheduled for Melbourne in November, and McGinness thought Burchett might use the occasion to steal into Australia. Though the possibility was "slim", McGinness surmised that a communist country might send Burchett to cover the Games as "a press representative." Indeed, the prospect concerned McGinness enough, for him to consider advising "the Olympic Games Organising Committee . . . [to] warn all national Olympic committees that Burchett must not be given a card." As a precautionary measure, McGinness placed Vessa Burchett on the Passport Warning List.[126]

McGinness' expertise was again utilised in mid-March, when Fitzpatrick sent the Minister a reminder about his October inquiry. The matter had been resting with Heyes. On receiving the reminder, he suggested to Holt that the Department would normally advise Burchett that his request for a passport "ha[d] not been approved", but "the birth of his younger child would be registered upon application to an Australian consulate within twelve months of its occurrence."[127] However, in a letter prepared by McGinness, authorised by Heyes, and signed by Holt, Fitzpatrick was told that Burchett had not only no right to an Australian passport, but also that the registration of his children as Australian citizens had been refused. The original draft of the letter had only referred to the refusal of Peter's registration, but on Holt's insistence young George's name was added. In its final draft, the letter also maintained that Wilfred had "left Australia fifteen years ago and ha[d] not since returned." Furthermore, his "activities since his departure ha[d] been such that he [was] considered to have forfeited any claim he might have had to . . . an Australian passport." Thus, the letter concluded that Burchett " ha[d] severed all connections with Australia."[128]

The point of severance was crucial to the Government's strategy of keeping Burchett out. Seemingly, it was McGinness' brainchild, mooted initially in a memorandum to Heyes in August 1955.

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[125] See the secret memorandum from T H E Heyes to the Immigration Minister, 26 October 1955, *ibid*, folios 195-196.
[126] Secret memorandum from H McGinness to the Secretary, Department of Immigration, March 1956; *ibid*, folio 201.
[127] Memorandum from T H E Heyes to the Immigration Minister, 4 April 1956, *ibid*, folio 222.
[128] See a handwritten note from the Secretary, T H E Heyes, to the Minister, 12 April 1956,*ibid*, folio 215. For the final draft, see the letter from the Minister for Immigration, H E Holt, to Brian Fitzpatrick, the General Secretary of the Australian Council for Civil Liberties, 13 April 1956, *ibid*, folio 216.

Concerned that Burchett might unexpectedly return, McGinness had suggested that he could either be "re-admitted", or barred on the basis that his prolonged absence rendered him no longer "'a constituent member of the Australian community', [but] . . . an 'immigrant' despite his possession of Australian citizenship."[129] It was slick sophistry and potentially an extraordinary abuse of power. Burchett, despite being Australian born and bred, was to be barred as an illegal immigrant on McGinness' recommendation and the stroke of Holt's pen.

Fitzpatrick suspected the letter was not Holt's work, but a "semi-literate" concoction from either ASIO or External Affairs.[130] He subsequently wrote to old George Burchett, enclosing Holt's response, and requesting "some facts" about Wilfred's family and professional connections in Australia, to the challenge the Minister's assertions of severance.[131] Fitzpatrick had also briefed the ACCL's legal counsel, Ted Laurie, on the case. Though acknowledging that Holt could use his ministerial discretion to deny a passport, Fitzpatrick challenged the Minister's claim that Burchett had "'forfeited'" his Australian citizenship. He also questioned Holt's right to refuse the registration of a child's birth if the application was received within the stipulated period. If contested, he suggested to Laurie, "the High Court would find in favour of Burchett's children."[132]

On 2 May Fitzpatrick informed Holt that his position contained errors of fact and law, appearing to be "animated by zeal for admonishment . . . rather than the letter and spirit of the statutes." From material provided by George Snr, Fitzpatrick detailed Wilfred's familial and professional associations with Australia; corrected the Minister's misapprehension that Wilfred "had [not] been in the country within fifteen years"; and reinforced that Wilfred was "an Australian citizen under the Act" and his children were "Australian by descent."[133]

But Holt was unmoved, reminding Fitzpatrick that citizenship was not a matter of "descent", but "acquired only upon registration of a birth at an Australian consulate" which, in the case of "Mrs Burchett's children", had been refused. Holt also reiterated that Burchett, though "not an alien by nationality", had spent "most of the latter years in Europe and Asia", and so "ha[d] severed connections with Australia to all intents and purposes." The Minister reminded Fitzpatrick that "passports ha[d] been . . . withheld on grounds other than the nationality of the applicant." The remark inferred - at the least - improprieties on Burchett's behalf. Neither Holt nor the Government, however, was prepared to state the nature of these improprieties or test their substance in court.[134]

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[129] Secret memorandum from Harold McGinness to the Secretary, Department of Immigration, 8 August 1955, *ibid*, folio 178.
[130] See the letter from Brian Fitzpatrick entitled "re W Burchett's Counsel Notes", 28 April 1956; BPC Papers MU.
[131] Letter from Brian Fitzpatrick to George Burchett senior, 20 April 1956, BPC Papers MU.
[132] Letter from Brian Fitzpatrick entitled "re W Burchett's Counsel Notes", *op cit.*
[133] Letter from Brian Fitzpatrick to the Immigration Minister, H Holt, 2 May 1956, BPC Papers MU.
[134] Letter from Harold Holt, Minister for Immigration, to Brian Fitzpatrick, General Secretary, ACCL, 18 May 1956; BPC Papers MU.

In the meantime, Wilfred had been travelling through Cambodia, and testily complained that British and Australian agents were urging Cambodian authorities to either arrest or expel him for not carrying proper travel documents. His humour further darkened on learning of Holt's assertion that he had "severed his connection" with Australia. As he explained to Fitzpatrick, his father and grandfather were Australian, and so was Rainer. In addition, he had "conduct[ed] regular and active correspondence with . . . family members" during his absence, and, despite Holt's claims to the contrary, had periodically visited Australia throughout the 1940s. He had also contributed, frequently, to the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* and Melbourne *Argus* during that period, and subsequently to the Sydney *Tribune* and Melbourne *Guardian*. Although Holt might not approve of the latter papers' politics, Wilfred contended that they were undeniably Australian. So much, he angrily declared for Holt's "fabricated accusations" about "sever[ing] all connections" with Australia.[135]

Fitzpatrick again sought Laurie's opinion on Holt's position.[136] In early June Laurie, in response, reiterated that there was "a duty" on the Government "to register [a] birth if the application [wa]s made within 12 months", or otherwise at the minister's discretion. Laurie argued that the grounds on which Holt had exercised his discretion in the case of Burchett's children might be considered improper. The difficulty, he added, was in establishing the proof of Burchett's representations to consular officials.[137] Fitzpatrick passed Laurie's opinion onto Wilfred in Moscow. Seemingly, Fitzpatrick had conceded the matter of Wilfred's passport to the Government. As he explained, the Minister's decision was founded "on good legal ground." But Fitzpatrick suggested that Holt's use of ministerial discretion in refusing the registration of Burchett's children seemed improper. If Wilfred could establish that the British Consul had acted as an "agent" of the Australian Government, then a legal challenge "might be the best course."[138]

But old George Burchett was beginning to have his doubts. On 22 May he had written to Fitzpatrick, asking for him to "delay action" until the family had conferred. They apparently thought that the Government, if legally challenged, could use the case to "prejudice public opinion against [Wilfred]." A delay, George felt, might work in Wilfred's favour, allowing him to "go and strike . . . in those areas where he knows he will get a fair hearing." In the meantime George would "circulate" Holt's decision, and establish "a favourable climate" in which to pursue the matter "at a later date."[139]

By mid-June George was convinced that this was the proper course of action. Wilfred's fortunate escape from an air crash in Peking might have which swayed George. As he explained to Fitzpatrick, it "could have ended our work." But it was Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's "frightful tyranny" which convinced George. He told Fitzpatrick that it "create[d] a most unfavourable atmosphere for Wilfred's case." George envisaged Holt justifying Wilfred's banishment on the grounds

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[135] Letter from Wilfred Burchett to Brian Fitzpatrick, Saigon, 14 May 1956; BPC Papers, MU.
[136] Letter from Brian Fitzpatrick to E A H Laurie, 22 May 1956; BPC Papers, MU.
[137] Letter from Ted Laurie to Brian Fitzpatrick, 5 June 1956; BPC Papers, MU.
[138] Letter from Brian Fitzpatrick to Wilfred Burchett, undated; BPC Papers, MU.
[139] Letter from George Burchett to Brian Fitzpatrick, 22 June 1956; BPC Papers, MU.

that the Government was stemming "the spread of this monstrous ideology." Thus, George advised Wilfred that "having made our protests twice, and received letters from the Minister, which g[ave] excellent reasons for reopening the case at a more favourable time, it would be wise to postpone action."[140]

But Wilfred still pursued the matter, though half-heartedly. Evidence was hard to find, and by 1957 he was preoccupied with re-establishing his career.[141] The Government's actions went unquestioned and so its 'Burchett the traitor', fed on innuendo, prospered to become the dominant Burchett.

[140] See the letters from George Burchett to Brian Fitzpatrick, undated & 22 June 1956; BPC Papers, MU.
[141] Letter from Wilfred Burchett to Brian Fitzpatrick, Moscow, 24 August 1956; BPC Papers, MU.

Chapter 7 Frontiers

Cedric Belfrage was the associate editor of the radical New York weekly, the *Guardian*. He was British and had served as a press control officer with the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force in post-war Germany. While there, he met James Aronson, who held a similar post with the US Army's Information Control Division. By August 1948, Aronson and Belfrage were in New York and, with the assistance of John T McManus, about to publish the *Guardian's* first issue. As Aronson would later remark, the paper sought "to restore . . . basic American democratic principles."[1]

On 4 May 1953, Aronson and Belfrage were subpoenaed to appear before the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). They were accused of running a "Communist inspired propaganda machine", which was having a "sinister effect on Americanism." On 12 May they appeared before the HUAC's counsel, Roy Cohn. At the time, Cohn was assisting the prosecution's case against the alleged Soviet spies, the Rosenburgs. The *Guardian* had vigorously campaigned for the couple's acquittal. Cohn, however, was more interested in Belfrage and Aronson's activities in post-war Germany, where he alleged they had established a communist press. The allegation was neither substantiated, nor were charges laid.

Though a long-term resident of the US, Belfrage was not an American citizen. On 15 May he was classified by US authorities as a "dangerous alien" and served with a deportation order. Over the next two years, Belfrage and his colleagues pressed in the *Guardian* and courts for the order to be revoked. But the paper was on the political and journalistic margins, so Belfrage received little support from his more mainstream colleagues. On 13 May 1955, he was arrested and imprisoned. He was finally deported to Britain on 1 August, where he was appointed the *Guardian's* 'editor-in-exile'[2]

In June 1956, Belfrage represented the *Guardian* at the International Organisation of Journalists' Congress in Helsinki, where he met Wilfred. Belfrage was well aware of Wilfred's work, particularly his Korean War material, which had appeared in the *Guardian*. Wilfred was in Helsinki to "broaden [his] . . . contacts", and speak on the rights of dissenting journalists to freely move and express their opinions.[3] In passing, he remarked to Belfrage that he was considering moving from Hanoi, where he was well established. As the London *Observer's* Denis Bloodworth had noted on a recent visit, the Burchetts had "a nice house . . . with good servants", a new French car, and generally seemed "very happy."[4] But Wilfred had grown concerned that Vietnam, since the fall of the French and the failure of the 1956 elections to eventuate, was becoming a peripheral news story, and questioned the value of his work. He had mentioned to George the possibility of a "spell" in Europe, or

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[1] James Aronson, *The Cold War and the Press*, p 8.
[2] See *ibid*, pp 94-98.
[3] Letters from Wilfred to George Burchett, 20 March 1956; BP SLV.
[4] Letter from Denis Bloodworth to George Burchettt, 30 April 1956; BPC Papers, MU.

at least away from the tropics. Hence, when Belfrage suggested he become the *Guardian's* Moscow correspondent, Wilfred jumped at the opportunity.[5]

En route to Helsinki, he had briefly visited Moscow, where he met Soviet colleagues from his days in Berlin, including his "old friend . . . George Krokto[v]", now "a budding author and playwright." They had dined at a restaurant on the outskirts of Moscow, drinking and chatting into the early hours, and arranged to meet again on Wilfred's return from Helsinki.[6] The dinner would return to haunt Wilfred in later years. Though Krotkov undoubtedly swayed Wilfred's decision to settle in Moscow, there was also another, more immediate attraction.

Nikita Khrushchev had recently denounced Stalin's crimes at the Communist Party's Twentieth Congress, and commenced purging the Kremlin of Stalinist elements and releasing political prisoners from far-flung *gulags*. Wilfred had admired Stalin's "calm, clear, factual, down-to-earth manner", and considered that under him the Soviet Union was moving towards "the introduction of the communist state."[7] Now, on arriving in Khrushchev's Moscow, Wilfred was oddly matter-of-fact about Stalin's fall from grace. As he noted to George, Moscow seemed "very relaxed and the warm Russian feelings and natural frankness [were] all out on the surface again after the severe cleansing process which started with the Twentieth Congress."[8] Perhaps, like the Soviets, he too was attempting to purge his past and embrace a future under Khrushchev. So, he dismissed dissenters like Ochab in Poland and Nagy in Hungary, both of whom pressed for autonomy from Moscow. As yet, Wilfred was too blinkered by his progressive perception of history, and too much of an apologist for the Soviets, to countenance contrary views. Furthermore, he was still a Stalinist at heart, and though he mellowed with time, the legacy would taint his work in Moscow. Wilfred was too intent on lauding Soviet achievement, while blind to the skeletons in Stalin and Khrushchev's closets.

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The Burchetts settled in Moscow in May 1957, and were immediately confronted by the city's shortage of adequate family accommodation and consumer goods. During the previous September, Wilfred had applied for an apartment through the appropriate government housing and foreign press liaison authorities. By June 1957, he was still waiting to be placed, and the family had crowded into adjoining rooms at the Hotel Savoy. As Wilfred explained to George, it was an expensive though necessary recourse, which was not only draining royalties he had accumulated in Moscow, but also making it difficult to strike a working routine. Adding to his troubles was a recurring back ailment, which required frequent medical attention.[9] But in mid-June he was finally advised that an apartment had been found for his family.[10] He proudly wrote to George that it was "a very nice apartment of five

[5] The letters from Wilfred to George Burchett, 14 May & 6 May 1956; BP SLV. See also Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 190.
[6] See the letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, undated; BP SLV.
[7] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, undated; BP SLV.
[8] See the letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, undated; BP SLV.
[9] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett 4 June 1956; BP SLV.
[10] See Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, pp 196-7.

rooms, wonderfully located in a modern skyscraper . . . with a view over the whole of Moscow", including the Kremlin and Moscow River. The block was one of the city's finest addresses, he boasted, and "we are very lucky indeed to have found it."[11] Wilfred's neighbours included writers and a ballerina, and he was told that "Stalin himself . . . had chosen the original list of occupants."[12] Later, Wilfred's enemies would tout that he had acquired the apartment through the KGB.

In July, reports had appeared in the London *Daily Express* from Andrew Wilson in Moscow. Wilson was none other than Wilfred. Whilst at Panmunjom, Wilfred had met the *Express's* Russell Spurr and despite their differing politics, they became firm friends. Spurr was still with the *Express*, and on 3 July asked Wilfred to become the paper's correspondent in Moscow. After clearing the matter with the Soviet Press Department, Wilfred's reports began appearing under the Wilson *nom de plum*. The arrangement suited both Spurr and Wilfred, particularly as the New York *Guardian* had "a very different political colour" to the *Express*. But the arrangement also signified Wilfred's rather sullied reputation in Fleet Street. Though colleagues, like Spurr, still admired and trusted his work, the Burchett by-line was sufficiently tainted to cast doubt in the minds of readers about the credibility of his reports. Hence, Wilson was born, and continued as an *Express* contributor until an actual Andrew Wilson began writing for the London *Observer*.[13]

In the summer of 1958, Rainer planned to visit his father. It was to be their first meeting since Geneva. Rainer had just finished school, and was bound for Cambridge University to study history at Peterhouse. Erna was anxious that Soviet authorities might pressure Rainer to remain in Moscow, and so sought advice from the Foreign Office. Rather than easing her concerns, the Foreign Office suggested it was a possibility, and asked Erna if Rainer had any overriding incentives for returning to Britain. When she explained that he was bound for Peterhouse, diplomats assured that Rainer was most unlikely to remain in Moscow.[14]

He remembered his father's apartment had "five or six rooms" and was ludicrously spacious for the rent. He also remembered the "KGB-types" with whom his father mixed. He suspected Soviet authorities considered Wilfred a "welcome guest" and subsidised his stay. But Rainer dismissed rumours that his father was a KGB agent. The visit further rekindled their relationship and, thereafter, they kept "in close constant contact."[15]

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On the morning of 12 April 1960, Yuri Gagarin blasted into space and orbited the Earth for 68 minutes. Two days later, he was feted by Khrushchev in Moscow's Red Square. The Burchetts were there, with George, who was visiting from Australia, and heard Khrushchev acclaim the flight as the

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[11] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 4 June 1957; BP SLV.
[12] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 197.
[13] For details about the creation of Andrew Wilson see *At the Barricades*, p 198.
[14] Author's conversation with Rainer Burchett, London, 30 June 1999.
[15] *Ibid* & the letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, undated; BP SLV.

crowning achievement of the Revolution.[16] Surrounded by the vanquished order's palaces and churches, Wilfred noted that "the world . . . had never known such a day."[17] He felt that Gagarin and Soviet science, under the Party's auspices, now stood at the pinnacle of human achievement. Soviet communism had opened a new frontier, well beyond the capabilities of American capitalism.

Wilfred had been covering the Soviet space program for the *Express*, and so was well versed on the Sputnik probes, the dogs' flights, and "the history of Russian rocketry."[18] Unfortunately, Wilfred had left the *Express* for the London *Financial Times*, three months before Gagarin's flight. Though the latter paid less, he told George that it was a "better paper[,] . . . very solid [and] respectable", and "relatively objective", concentrating on "hard economic facts", which Wilfred found "infinitely more satisfactory than hunting around for the *Daily Express* type of story."[19] Perhaps, as Wilfred stood in Red Square, he momentarily rued his decision. The Gagarin story was undeniably better suited to the more populist *Express*.

A London literary agent contacted Wilfred shortly after the flight. The agent, who was aware of Wilfred's interest in space, disclosed that Panther Books wanted a quick account of the flight. Wilfred agreed to write one with Anthony Purdy: a former Fleet Streeter turned freelancer, and a specialist on scientific affairs.[20] Wilfred was to ensure the work was written in a "popular vein acceptable to the ordinary reader." In other words, it was to be an "*Express* type of story", though with Wilfred's peculiar hallmarks.[21] Gagarin turned out to be a chip off the Burchett block: a heroic pioneer who not only pushed back the frontier, but also lifted "the veils of clouds" from the heavens, and transformed science fiction into scientific facts.[22]

Within months, however, the Americans had fired John Shepherd into space. Unlike Gagarin's orbital flight, Shepherd's only touched the Earth's outer rim. But it diminished Gagarin's achievement in the West, heralded the space race, and certainly stiffened the tenor of Wilfred and Purdy's book. Suddenly, they were faced with a competing story from the other side of the ideological frontier and, in response, shaped their tale to assert the superiority of Soviet communism over American capitalism. They touted that the American space program, in being a product of American capital, was fundamentally flawed. It was too competitively charged, with military and "civilian chiefs", and "commercial contractors", each staking their individual claims. Furthermore, it was designed to bolster US defence capability, in contrast to the Soviet program, which sought the peaceful and altruistic advancement of scientific inquiry.[23] Thus, Wilfred and Purdy cast Gagarin's flight as a triumph for the *peacenik* over the warrior, and the collectivist over the individualist. It also celebrated Soviet

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[16] Wilfred Burchett & Anthony Purdy, *Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, First Man in Space*, pp 15-16.
[17] *Ibid*, p 17.
[18] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 199.
[19] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 17 January 1960; BP SLV.
[20] For details on Purdy's career see *Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, First Man in Space*, p 184.
[21] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, undated; BP SLV.
[22] Wilfred Burchett and Anthony Purdy, *op cit*, p 133.
[23] *Ibid*, pp 54 & 30.

meritocracy. Wilfred remembered that on Gagarin's arrival in Moscow, the cosmonaut's mother, Anna, and father, Alexei, dressed in their peasant garb, stood with the Soviet leaders.[24] The couple's presence signified that there were no impediments to advancement in Soviet society, and the son of peasants, if determined enough, could indeed reach for the stars. Wilred and Purdy's Gagarin, in doing so, displayed to the West that the Soviets had moved well beyond hammers and sickles, to the pinnacle of human achievement.

On 9 June Burchett and Purdy, accompanied by George, were summoned to the Cultural and Foreign Relations building in Moscow. Seven weeks before, the authors had requested an interview with Gagarin. In the interim, Burchett's articles on the flight had appeared in western and Soviet papers, and Shepherd had completed his mission. Perhaps the latter prompted Soviet authorities to grant Burchett and Purdy's request, as all other applications from Soviet and foreign journalists for access to Gagarin had been refused.[25] But the interview was a disappointing affair, more symbolic than informative. On its conclusion, George stepped forward and presented Gagarin with a boomerang, explaining that it was "a symbol of safe return." Gagarin graciously remarked, it was "a nice symbol to have."[26]

The Gagarin book was published in 14 countries. Wilfred advised George that he was expecting his "first sizeable handout of cash" in late December, and that Panther "expect[ed] the book to keep selling for a couple of years as it [was] regarded as a classic." Though the book touted the communist line, it was plainly a capitalist endeavour.[27]

Meanwhile, Wilfred and Purdy had embarked on another space book. On the day *Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin* was released, Gherman Titov completed 17 orbits of the Earth, prompting Panther to request a book on the flight. Within three weeks Burchett and Purdy had interviewed the cosmonaut and his parents, who lived on the south-eastern fringes of the Siberian lowlands. Wilfred noted to George, the Titovs were a "fine pioneer type of people", reminiscent "of our own family in the early days." They were "self-educated," had "musical and literary tastes", and a "fine independent spirit." They, he mooted, "will be the first and I think the most interesting [chapter] in the book." It was to be the second in "a series of such space books", he added. He was considering a collaboration with Moscow Radio's science correspondent, Boris Belitzky, which Panther had accepted "in principle", as well as another book with Purdy. As Wilfred gloated: "Tony and I . . . have both feet well inside the space door now and it is doubtful if anyone can catch up as far as the Soviet space effort is involved."[28]

But an unexpected obstacle scuttled Wilfred's plans. Apparently, the Titov book was mistakenly entitled *My Fight into Outer Space*, with the cosmonaut, and not Wlifred and Purdy,

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[24] Wilfred Burchett, *Come East Young Man!*, p 270.
[25] *Ibid*, p 118; & Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 201.
[26] Wilfred Burchett & Anthony Purdy, *op cit*, pp 121-12?
[27] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 1 December 1960; BP SLV.
[28] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, undated; BP SLV.

accredited with authorship. Fortuitously, the mistake was found while the book was still at the printers. Wilfred contacted the publishers demanding it be rectified. The cost of the correction exceeded the book's royalties.[29] Wilfred never ventured into space again, turning instead to earthier frontiers.

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Perhaps the Titov visit swayed Wilfred to delve further into the Soviet pioneering spirit, or it might have been the banner, "Come East Young Man", for thousands of young workers were vacating Soviet cities to tame the country's numerous frontiers. During the early 1960s, Wilfred travelled extensively throughout these frontier regions. In so-called "grim Siberia", he found "lovely undulating country" of well-ordered pastures, and vast hydro-electric plants that fuelled even vaster industrial enterprises.[30] As he flew westwards over Kazakstan, he noted the "geometric rows" of cultivated fields; while in Uzbekistan, the "dreary" desert, which had buried older civilisations, was being pushed back by "tidy stretches of green . . .[and] rows of trees . . . laced with water."[31] In places where the climate had once set "categorical limits", production was now soaring.[32] Soviet technology, Wilfred noted, had increased farm yields and industrial outputs, to levels where the transformation from socialism to pure communism was a foreseeable reality.[33] Indeed, the signs were already apparent to Wilfred. Workers had been rewarded with a seven-hour day, free education and healthcare, and low rental housing and subsidised holiday accommodation. They had "absolute cradle-to-the-grave economic security", Wilfed declared.[34] He thought it inevitable that Soviet production and living standards would surpass those in the US. For starters, there was no unemployment in the Soviet Union; nor were there "Negro sharecroppers, . . . Mexican immigrant workers, . . . poor whites, [or] . . . sweat shops." There were also no cartels, shareholders, or "superelites", and there were no depressions to stop those with ability from succeeding.[35] In the Soviet Union, peasants' sons became cosmonauts.

But Wilfred was also having doubts. In 1960, he had finally - though briefly - condemned Stalinism's "personality cult" and "overlong concentrations of power." He neglected to elaborate on the regime's purges and extermination of the *kulaks*, or his past admiration for Stalin's style of communism. Instead, he mooted that the country's preoccupation with science was developing a new repressive culture.[36] One of Wilfred's friends in Moscow was the writer and former Paris correspondent for *Izvestiya*, Ilya Ehrenburg, who also condemned - though after its passing - Stalinism. In the autumn of 1959, Ehrenburg had written a letter to *Pravda* under the *nom de plum* of Nina. She was having problems with her boyfriend, Yuri, an engineer, who considered music and poetry dated and love a frivolous affectation, certainly not to be taken too seriously in this utilitarian age, in which the engineer and bureaucrat ruled, with science and statistics their instruments of power. Sensibility

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[29] See Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 203.
[30] Wilfred Burchett, *Come East Young Man!*, p 22.
[31] *Ibid*, p 87.
[32] *Ibid*, p 56.
[33] *Ibid*, p 139.
[34] *Ibid*, p 232.
[35] *Ibid*, pp 204 & 195
[36] *ibid*, pp 315-316.

could not be rationalised or measured, and so was shunned by Yuri and his fellow boffins. Wilfred followed the ensuing debate with great interest. Initially, engineers flooded *Pravda* in support of Yuri. Over time, however, supporters of Nina triumphed, much to Wilfred's relief. He, too, was concerned that Soviet society was in danger of losing its soul.[37]

The debate seemingly prodded Wilfred to revisit forgotten fragments from his past. In March 1960 he was stranded in the airport terminal at Tashkent. While waiting for storms to abate, and the snow and ice to be shovelled from the runway, he wrote to George and Rainer of his trip to date. It had started in India, where he met with Prime Minister Nehru, the Canadian High Commissioner, Chester Ronning, and his Australian counterpart, Walter Crocker, who confided to Wilfred that Eggleston had regarded him highly. Wilfred also lunched with the former Chindit commander, Bernard Fergusson: "a full-blooded Troy, but a good man." He apparently remembered Wilfred "with great pleasure", though he had since "heard and read all sorts of awful things" about him. It was as though a figure from Wilfred's past had come back to judge him, so he told his side of the story to Fergusson, who was "entirely sympathetic." "A man must do what his conscience tells him", Ferguson advised, otherwise he "is no longer a man." While walking through the foyer of his Delhi hotel, he spotted another reminder of his past. Ma Than E had lost none of her beauty. Her sudden appearance obviously ruffled long-forgotten feelings within Wilfred, for he told George and Rainer that he was "constantly plunged into very intimate memories of 17 or 18 years ago."[38]

As he skipped over 'the hump' and into the Soviet Union's Asian republics the old wanderlust for off-the-track places began to return. At Bokhara, he pondered the "changing panorama of history that the old walls of the city had seen." It was a heroic past of pioneering and conquest. Wilfred self-consciously stood where Darius and Alexander the Great had passed, and the Mongol, Genghis Khan. In the map room of the old fortress in Samarkand, Wilfred plotted the Old Silk Road towards China. He told George and Rainer that he too would have travelled the road like Marco Polo, "if I had been around at the time." Oddly, as he wandered around Samarkand, Wilfred experienced "one of the most moving days of [his] life."[39] He later remarked that "a traveller would be a poor soul or insensitive to history" if he were not moved by such sights and cities.[40] Whilst amongst them, he seemingly became aware of time's passing, and yearned for his past as a traveller. Days later, as he flew westwards towards Moscow, his thoughts perhaps drifted eastwards, to other roads on far-flung frontiers that were now distant memories, and plotted his return.

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In the northern spring of 1962, Wilfred travelled the road from Hanoi to Diem Bien Phu. It was still a frontier road, he wrote, enmeshed within a "raw, clam and powerful" landscape. But civilisation's markings were beginning to dot the road. Once "dense jungle-covered mountains . . .

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[37] See *ibid*, pp 155, 262 & 263.
[38] Letter from Wilfred to George and Rainer Burchett, 14 March 1960; BP SLV.
[39] *Ibid.*
[40] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 70.

were now fertile clearings", as though nature had been "tamed and embellished." Nonetheless, Wilfred found travelling the road still "a hair-raising experience." Foaming torrents had to be forded, slender bridges of "squared-off tree trunks" crossed, and hairpin bends and near vertical drops safely negotiated, before "the smiling valley" of Diem Bien Phu appeared.[41]

It too had changed. The bomb craters had been filled-in and the ground levelled. But Wilfred found " a shattered Sherman tank", its cannon limp and impotent. A short distance on, he noticed the "tombstones of two unknown heroes", who had been "buried on the spot from which they [had] hurled the grenades that destroyed the tank and themselves." Their graves, Wilfred noted, stood as testimony "to man's superiority over machines." Beyond them, old soldiers and new settlers ploughed the valley. A state farm had been established in 1958 and had since cultivated 5,000 acres.[42] Before Wilfred stretched a pioneered landscape, won by the self-sacrifice of the unknown soldiers, and nurtured by the settlers who were reaping the benefits. But the battle was not over yet. Indeed, it was continuing over the frontier in Laos.

Though land-locked, Laos bordered communist China and North Vietnam, neutralist Cambodia, and US-backed Thailand; and in the early 1960s was the most sought-after prize in the region. As Kennedy's adviser, Arthur Schlesinger, put it: "If Laos was not precisely a dagger pointed at the heart of Kansas, it was plainly a gateway to South East Asia."[43] The 1954 Geneva Conference had installed a neutralist government under Prince Souvanna Phouma; a seemingly sensible option given Laos frontiers. Souvanna's half-brother, Prince Souphanouvong, led the leftist Pathet Lao, which was anti-American and pro-neutralist, and perceived by rightists as a threat to the new government. By 1956 Pathet Lao forces had doubled in size, and bolstered their armouries with assistance from the North Vietnamese and Chinese. They had also cemented their hold on the country's northern provinces, thereby thwarting Dulles' strategy of containing and, where possible, rolling-back communism.[44]

The US had established the South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in September 1954. The following February, SEATO proclaimed Laos - along with Cambodia and South Vietnam - "protocol" states. As Dulles explained at the time, the measure protected these countries from external communist aggression and, if the need arose, from "communists within." The Eisenhower Administration subsequently channelled more per capita aid into Laos than any other Asian country. The aid was primarily spent on bolstering the Royal Lao Army. Indeed, the military received $US184 million, whilst a meagre $US1.3 million was allocated to urgently needed agricultural projects. With the influx came inflation, cronyism and corruption, and a widening breach between the urban 'haves' and the rural 'have-nots'. It was not for the benefit of all, but to prop-up a pro-US puppet government

[41] Wilfred Burchett, *The Furtive War: The United States in Viet Nam and Laos*, pp 132-134.
[42] *Ibid*, pp 132-134 & 142
[43] Arthur W Schlesinger Jnr, *A Thousand Days: John F Kennedy in the White House*, p 295
[44] Martin Stuart-Fox, *A History of Laos*, pp 93-94.

backed by a reasonably armed militia.[45] For a brief period it succeeded, as in October 1954, the pro-American leader of the Progressive Party, Katay, displaced Souvanna. By late December 1955, however, Souvanna had reclaimed power and was seeking to reunify the country under a neutralist regime.

The Americans, in cohorts with their western allies, were keen to mask their activities in Laos. It was primarily a CIA war, undeclared and covert, and fought by the locals at the behest of the Americans. Hence, they were understandably disturbed when, in May 1956, Burchett appeared in Vientiane. Shortly after his arrival, police raided his hotel room, cancelled his visa, and issued him with an expulsion order. He later told Victor James, the Lao Government suspected he was travelling on "forged papers and . . . should be arrested or expelled." A subsequent inspection, however, revealed that "[his] papers were perfectly in order and [his] visa was restored."[46] Unbeknown to Wilfred, the British Embassy had heard on the diplomatic grapevine that the Government had originally intended to deny him a visa, but the Lao Foreign Ministry's muddling enabled him to slip through the net.[47]

Burchett had requested an interview with Souvanna. Though refused, the latter had allowed Burchett to submit a list of written questions. P A Briddle, a Canadian delegate to the International Control Commission (ICC), had learned that the Lao Cabinet was split on whether Souvanna should respond. The pro-American Katay "strongly advis[ed] against it", but Souvanna ignored him, and apparently answered "on the understanding that the interview was confidential." A disturbed Briddle noted to Ottawa, "there the matter might have rested had Burchett not decided to transmit over Radio Hanoi certain selected portions of the interview with comments of his own."[48]

Burchett had suggested that under Souvanna there were "clear signs of [a shift] towards neutralism and co-existence in Laos." In contrast to the Katay Administration, Souvanna sought good relations with the Chinese and North Vietnamese, took exception to US interference in Lao affairs, and had "no intention of joining SEATO", nor any desire for its "protection." Burchett also claimed that Souphanouvong was seeking an agreement with Souvanna, despite the efforts of "external sources", namely the Americans.[49] Such a scenario would shift the Souvanna Government to the left, isolating the American-backed Katay.

According to Briddle, the US Embassy's Max Finger called on Souvanna to express his concern over the interview. Finger had apparently "decided" that the full text should be published, with a qualifying paragraph stating "that the interpretation of the interview as a reversal of Laotian foreign

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[45] See *ibid, pp* 90-91.
[46] Letter from Wilfred to the Reverend Victor James, Peking, 27 May 1956; BPC Papers MU.
[47] Secret memorandum from P A Bridle, Canadian Delegate, International Commission for Supervision & Control in Laos, to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, Canada, 16 May 1956: FO 370A 1017/182, "Vientiane Monthly Letter for May 1956."
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] For details see the transmission VNA Hanoi to Peking (DRV Mission) 13 May 1956; VNA Hanoi, 11 May 1956; & 14 May 1956; *ibid.*

policy was completely false." A statement was subsequently released, masterminded by Finger and signed by Souvanna, "reiterating that [the latter] held by the foreign policy of the [previous] Katay Government." A further statement, under Souvanna's name, praised the contribution of the Americans to the Lao economy.[50]

Burchett had also reported that the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was scrutinising staff at the American Embassy in Vientiane for possible leftist associations. The story came as a relief to Briddle and the British Embassy's Ziegler. Both considered it "ridiculous", and suggested that Burchett had "over-reached himself", thankfully undermining the impact of the Souvanna interview. Ziegler noted that the Laotians would be less inclined to treat the communist line seriously, whilst Briddle considered the story, coupled with Souvanna's statement, "a net gain." However, he cautioned: "I am inclined to think that Burchett was not completely wide of the mark in his assessment of the present government as more neutralist than the last."[51] In August 1956 Souphanouvong's Pathet Lao entered a Government of National Union under Souvanna's leadership. Wilfred had been right on the "mark."

He returned to Vientiane in January 1957, accompanied by Vessa. The coalition government was still in power, and Souphanouvong had been incorporated into Souvanna's cabinet. Despite the leftward tilt of the government, Wilfred, on arrival in Vientiane, was ordered to leave the country within 24 hours. The period was later extended, but Wilfred found that he was shunned in Vientiane press circles. He recalled that an American colleague, whom he had arranged to meet for dinner, reneged at the last moment. Apparently, he told Wilfred that he could not be seen in his company. The US Embassy, the American added, blamed Wilfred "for bringing the princes together."[52]

Shortly before their departure, Wilfred and Vessa were in a small bar enjoying an aperitif. They were waiting for another correspondent who failed to appear. A drunken American approached and asked to join them, but Wilfred politely told him it was a private conversation. The drunk stumbled outside to a stationary rickshaw and fell asleep. When Wilfred went to pay his bill, the barman warned him that the American was not drunk, but a CIA agent. As he and Vessa left the bar, the American rolled from the rickshaw to the jeep, and drove in their direction. The jeep missed Wilfred and glanced Vessa. The following morning Wilfred returned to thank the barman, who blankly said, "I don't know what you're talking about and I've never seen you before." Given the nature of Wilfred's reports from Laos, and the determination of American diplomats and CIA agents to mask the real story and isolate the Pathet Lao, the incident should not be lightly dismissed.[53]

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[50] See the secret memorandum by P A Briddle, *op cit.*
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] Wilfred Burchett, *The Second Indochina War*, p 123-124.
[53] *Ibid.*

When Wilfred returned to Laos in 1962, it was embroiled in an American orchestrated civil war. In May 1958 Souvanna had been returned to power at the polls. Nonetheless, Washington had decided to topple him and install a government more to its liking. On the pretext that Souvanna had misused funds from the Commodity Import Program, and not instituted monetary reforms, the State Department's Far Eastern Affairs Branch decided to forestall aid payments.[54] As a result, a vote of 'no confidence' in the Government was carried in the National Assembly, and the US State Department's choice, Phoumi Sananikone, was installed as Prime Minister. Burchett would later allege that the CIA had offered each member of the Assembly $US100,000 to vote against Souvanna.[55]

But the CIA and US Defense Department were pushing their own candidate. Phoumi Nosavan headed the CIA-backed and military-based Committee for the Defence of National Interest (CDNI). A cousin of the Thai strongman, Sarit Tharsat, Nosavan was a pedigreed anti-communist. Unlike Sananikone, who allowed the Pathet Lao some liberties, Nosavan was determined to eradicate leftists from Laos.[56] Sananikone had included CDNI members in his cabinet, which stiffened the Government's anti-communist agenda, but pushed Souvanna towards the Pathet Lao. On 15 December 1958, a Royal Lao Army patrol had been ambushed in a disputed area of the Lao-North Vietnamese border. In response to reports of massing North Vietnamese troops, Sananikone instituted emergency measures, increased CDNI representation in his cabinet and imprisoned leftist politicians, including Souphanouvong. As Nosavan had been appointed Defence Minister, and the CDNI was strongly linked with the Royal Lao Army, he was able to act independently of Sananikone and, with CIA support, launched an offensive against the Pathet Lao, which had retreated to its northern strongholds, bordering North Vietnam and China.[57] Meanwhile, Souphanouvong, with 14 of his colleagues, had escaped from a Vientiane prison, and began trekking north. In the spring of 1959, the CDNI triumphed in an election marked by Thai and American interference, military and police coercion, and extensive ballot-rigging. The new Prime Minister, Somsarit Vongkatrattana, was little more than a puppet of Nosavan and the CIA.[58]

In early August 1961, Somsarit's Government was sitting in the royal capital, Luang Prabang, when troops under the command of a maverick neutralist officer, Kong Le, seized Vientiane. While Nosavan's troops re-grouped at Savannakhet, Somsarit tendered his resignation to the King, and Souvanna was invited to form a government. Its tenure was brief, as on 16 December Nosavan's forces recaptured Vientiane. But the Pathet Lao, Kong Le and the neutralists had secured northern and eastern Laos, including the strategically important Plain of Jars, which was accessible to North Vietnamese supply lines.[59]

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[54] Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F Kennedy*, p 118.
[55] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 172.
[56] Roger Hilsman, *op cit*, pp 114-118.
[57] See Martin Stuart-Fox, *op cit*, pp 105-107.
[58] *Ibid*, p 111.
[59] *Ibid*, pp 112, 114 & 116-117.

Wilfred arrived in Khong Khay on the Plain in February 1962. Though the parties had agreed to forthcoming negotiations in Geneva, Wilfred sensed that a military confrontation was inevitable. Nosavan had massed troops at Nam Tho, 30 miles south of the Sino-Lao border. Furthermore, shortly after Wilfred's arrival, Souvanna had returned from aborted talks in Vientiane. He complained to Wilfred that Nosavan and the US Ambassador, Winthrop Brown, had treated him as "tourist."[60]

But of all Laos' leaders, it was Souphanouvong who most impressed Wilfred. He had first met the Pathet Lao leader in 1954 at Ho Chi Minh's jungle headquarters. Now, Wilfred cast him as a frontier man, well-steeled for the struggle ahead, having forsaken the pleasures of princely life for the tribulations of the jungle track. As with all of Wilfred's heroes, Souphanouvong's mettle had been tested on the track. Wilfred would later tell the "epic" tale of Souphanouvong's escape from Vientiane, and his prolonged trek to Khong Khay. He and his band had forded, scaled and trudged northwards for six months, living off the land. "[T]here was no privilege in our party", he told Wilfred, "it was strictly share and share alike."[61] As with Wilfred's Ho and Wingate, Souphanouvong was prepared to put the well-being of his comrades before his own, and so had earned the right to lead, not only his men, but also his country.

He distrusted the latest American peace overture of "a neutral government." As he explained to Wilfred: "We see no neutral attitude from them, only their policy of aggression."[62] By early May Nosavan's troops had been routed, and the Americans advised Souvanna of their willingness to negotiate. At Geneva, in mid-June, the warring parties agreed to protect Laos' neutrality and acknowledge the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. Wilfred noted to George that the agreement was "a considerable defeat for US policy in South East Asia", and he wondered if the Americans would ever "understand that no amount of dollars and arms can defeat a united people." Though Laos had been settled in "a good way", he added, whether "the Yanks are going to get out is another thing."[63]

By mid-May Wilfred was back at his desk in Moscow. Before him was a substantial chunk of a manuscript on American aggression in South East Asia, and a letter to George. Never before, he told George, had he worked with "such dramatic, colourful and significant material." He was tapping-out 8000 words daily, and had suspended all newspaper commitments until the book's completion. Tentatively titled, "The Quiet Aggression", Wilfred doubted its contents would be would be to the "liking" of all publishers. After all, the aggression in Indo-China was primarily covert, and his was a dissenter's view.[64]

By late June the book had been completed and was circulating amongst publishers. *The Furtive War* finally appeared in early October, and Wilfred told George it was "the most important

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[60] Wilfred Burchett, *The Second Indo China War*, p 102.
[61] Wilfred Burchett, *The Furtive War*, p 186.
[62] Wilfred Burchett, *The Second Indo China War*, p 143.
[63] Wilfred Burchett, *The Furtive War*, p 208.
[64] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 3 June 1962, BP SLV.

book [he had] written, quite authoritative . . . [and] a pioneer work in keeping with the family's pioneer traditions."[65] It had also come at a propitious time. He had sent another manuscript, based on his travels through the Soviet Union's frontiers, to his London publisher, Lawrence & Wishart. Though "interesting, topical [and] well done", the publisher "doubted there would be sufficient interest in the book."[66] *Come East Young Man!* was finally published by the East Berlin state concern, Seven Seas. Undoubtedly, Lawrence & Wishart's response prompted Wilfred to pursue his pioneering work on the more marketable South East Asian frontiers. But there were also other factors which influenced Wilfred's decision.

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In the spring of 1962 Wilfred had met with Ho in Hanoi. Ho confided that he was concerned about the increasing tensions between the Soviet Union and China. He had written to Khrushchev, warning that the dispute was undermining international communist solidarity, and had the potential to hamper the resistance movement in Vietnam.[67] Wilfred, too, was having misgivings about Soviet communism's stultifying bureaucracy, closeted elitism, and notions of "papal infallibility" towards their Chinese brethren.[68] As a Moscow resident, his concerns placed him in a prickly spot, which was compounded by his political exile from Australia.

Clive Burchett was a member of the ACP and an admirer of the Soviet style. In March 1963, Wilfred asked George to tell Clive that the Chinese complaints against the Soviets were "100 per cent correct, and confirm[ed] what I have thought for a long time." Wilfred, who was writing from Peking, considered Chinese communism more accountable to the people. The Chinese leadership was prepared to put its case alongside the Soviet's, Wilfred emphasised, to "let the people judge" each side's merits. The Soviets, however, had not published "a single word of the Chinese case." It was another example of the Soviet's dislike of communists and progressives, who were prepared to "think for themselves", rather than obey Moscow's traditional "infallibility" on communist matters. Those days, Wilred declared, were "gone forever." He cautioned George and Clive not to gossip of his reservations or bandy about his letter.[69] "[I]n writing to my home address", he urged "the need for discretion in any comments." Indeed, he suggested remarks on the spilt should be restricted to non-Soviet correspondence only.[70] Wilfred obviously suspected that his mail was being scrutinised. He was sensing the sinister side of Soviet communism.

On a more personal note, he was also wearying of Moscow's weather, which was increasingly aggravating his bothersome back. In October 1962, Wilfred spent three months in a Moscow hospital, incapacitated by back pain, which refused to respond to treatment. Depressed and beginning to feel his

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[65] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 29 June 1962; BP SLV.
[66] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Moscow, 17 October 1962; BP SLV.
[67] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 212.
[68] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Peking, 28 March 1963; BP SLV.
[69] *Ibid.*
[70] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Peking, 24 April 1963; BP SLV.

age, he told the *Guardian's* James Aronson, "I have never felt so useless in all my working life."[71] By March 1963 he was fit enough to travel to Peking.[72] Though "feeling much better", his Moscow doctors had advised him to be more measured in his movements, limit his time at the typewriter, and "avoid wet cold climates as much as possible."[73] Whilst in Peking he commenced acupuncture treatment, which relieved some of the discomfort. But it was short-lived, and by late April he was again complaining to George about "getting old."[74] Perhaps his thoughts drifted to warmer parts.

In April he had briefly returned to Vientiane. It was a timely but sobering visit. The Geneva Agreement was in tatters, while the neutralists fought amongst themselves over whether or not to accept American aid. As a consequence, Kong Le, w' . supported the measure, severed his association with the stridently anti-US, Pathet Lao. Wilfred told George that Souvanna had also sold out to the Americans. Since the ceasefire, they had covertly attempted to "buy over the neutralist forces, then set them together with Nosavan to wipe out the Pathet Lao." It was "absolutely shocking perfidy", Wilfred added, and "my fingers are fairly burning to write up the inside story of all this."[75]

By early May he had returned to Moscow and was writing the 'Preface' for the up-dated editions of *The Furtive War*. The book had already been released in Hungary, and was due out in Moscow any day. It was also scheduled for release in the US in June. It was there that Wilfred "really wanted it read." Rather portentously, he noted to George that the book would "enunciate what will be a world story for some years to come - I'm afraid." He also confided that "before the year is out I expect to have pulled off a really big journalistic coup."[76]

It is unclear when and where the letter was written, as it was neither dated nor post-marked. Perhaps it was penned during Wilfred's brief stop in Vientiane in November 1963 *en route* from Hanoi to Phnom Penh. From there, he hoped to sneak across the Cambodian border into the NLF-controlled Mekong Delta region of South Vietnam, undetected by the Cambodian authorities.[77] The letter could also have been written in the preceding month, while Wilfred trekked through the South's Central Highlands with the Front's cadres. It was amongst the most important that Wilfred wrote to George. As he explained: "I am engaged in one of the most important things of my life as far as reporting and personal education is concerned."[78] He would later rate his travels through the NLF-controlled South as "the greatest event in my quarter . . . century of journalism."[79] In the spirit of his pioneering forebears, he was about to peg-out a substantial claim on the other side of the frontier.

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[71] Cited by James Aronson in his tribute to Burchett, "His Editor Recalls How it was . . . and is", the *National Guardian*, 5 October 1983. Wilfred's letter was apparently dated 29 October 1963.
[72] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 24 April 1963; BP SLV.
[73] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 21 March 1963; BP SLV.
[74] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 24 April 1969; BP SLV.
[75] *Ibid.*.
[76] Letters from Wilfred to George Burchett, Moscow, 19 May, 5 May & 19 June 1963, BP SLV.
[77] See *At the Barricades*, p 214.
[78] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, undated, BP SLV.
[79] Wilfred Burchett, *My Visit to the Liberated Zones of South Vietnam*, p 9.

He had arrived in the Central Highlands in mid-October, accompanied by Nguyen Han Ching, an NLF staff officer, who had lived with the *Montagnard* people for 17 years. At 52, podgy and with a 'crook' back, Wilfred must surely have doubted his capacity to endure several months of solid jungle trekking, though on his own admission, he had put himself through "a tough training programme" beforehand.[80] He reckoned his inner steeliness, forged in his "rough tough" youth, would hold him in good stead.[81] In part, Wilfred was walking to recapture that youth, and prove that he still was a chip off Caleb's block.

As in Burma with Rodger, he walked "where no white man [had] ever dared go before." In Darlac, he and Ching stumbled upon " a tribe of . . . early stone age cave dwellers who ha[d] means of communication but no language."[82] The NLF had apparently discovered the tribe in 1961, and a cadre had since gone to live with them, adopting their ways so as "to help them move forward from their state of savagery." They went about "naked except for their tattoo marks and loin cloths." They were armed with "crossbows and poison arrows and traps made with bamboo spikes to defend their homes and cultivation patches." But despite their savagery, they had preserved "precious human values like loyalty, family lore, honesty, sincerity [and] generosity until their last handful of maize."[83]

The real "savages" came by air, launching raids from dawn until dusk. The aircraft were flown by "the products of western schools and . . . religions", who without thought "wip[ed] out whole villages, even the babes[,] . . . old men and women." The peasants' workhorses, the water buffaloes, were even strafed, to strangle food production. Yet, Wilfred declared to George, "the people [were] winning, . . . all over the place." As he went, he tapped-out his thoughts. He boasted to George that the account of his trek could be "as exciting an adventure ever written", in the mould of Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China*.[84] However, Wilfred was not bound for Mao's Shensi commune, but the more menacing peripheries of Ngo Dinh Diem's Saigon.[85]

Diem's administration was little more than a Catholic family fiefdom, cobbled onto a predominantly Buddhist society. Diem's brother, Nhu, conducted the daily business of state, including organising the activities of its vast secret police network. Diem's other brother, Archbishop Thuc, headed the Catholic Church, whilst, Nhu's wife guarded moral standards. On assuming power in 1954, Diem had instituted a campaign to rid the South of dissenters to his rule. The Cao Dai, Hoa Hao and Binh Xuyen sects had been suppressed, as had pro-Buddhist agitators and liberals, and most notably of all, the communists. According to Vietnamese People's Army (VPA) figures, the Diem regime had killed 4971 alleged communists, injured another 10,185, and imprisoned a further 183,743 between

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[80] *Ibid*, p 47.
[81] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, *op cit*.
[82] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 20.
[83] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, *op cit*.
[84] *Ibid*..
[85] Cited by Wilfred Burchett, *The Furtive War*, ; 83. Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, Pelican Books 1973.

1954 and 1959.[86] The repression sowed the seeds for broad-based opposition, which Ho masterfully exploited. In 1957, his cadres commenced organising armed companies on the western fringes of the Mekong Delta, and within four years the number of assassinated government officials had jumped from 1200 to 4000 annually.[87] In December 1960, the National Liberation Front was established to further the armed struggle. Under the leadership of a French-educated, Saigon lawyer, Nguyen Huu Tho, it comprised disaffected sect members, frustrated Buddhists and liberals, and the remnants of the Viet Minh. Although indicative of discontent in the South, the Front was of Ho's making.[88]

In response, Diem, with substantial US assistance, intensified the repression. In 1961, the US funnelled $US125 million into the South. Within a year, Kennedy had increased the amount to $US400 million, which included the dispatch of 7000 military advisers to support the South Vietnamese forces.[89] Diem, on American advice, had also commenced herding people from their traditional villages and lands into 'prosperity zones' or strategic hamlets, encircled with barbed wire, bamboo palisades and moats. The strategy sought to isolate the people from the NLF. It had been successfully used during the Malay insurgency, and by the end of September 1962, Diem was boasting that 33.39% of the population were housed in strategic hamlets.[90] But as Wilfred was about to discover, the hamlets amounted to a system of "concentration camps", which inflamed rather than quelled the resistance.[91]

As he walked, rode and crawled through the South, he noted that the NLF controlled vast tracts of the country, including the hamlets. Indeed, the ease with which Wilfred's party meandered about was testimony to the limitations of Diem's power. Wilfred later wrote that "[he] could never have travelled through the heart of the massive defence complex that surrounds Saigon", unless it was controlled by the NLF.[92] Indeed, Wilfred estimated that 95% of the South Vietnamese countryside was in NLF hands, including the entire Mekong Delta.[93] There were "no safe areas for the Saigon regime in the whole of South Vietnam as far as one can judge", he noted.[94] Along the track, he noticed envelopes were passed, warning of likely dangers ahead. On one occasion, Wilfred was hurriedly ushered into a network of tunnels in the Cu Chi area, while a battle raged overhead. Morning papers arrived from Saigon, as did the occasional bottle of cold beer, and the cadres ensured that Wilfred's mail to Vessa was delivered.[95] In the interim, Wilfred inspected jungle-covered arms factories and hospitals, met Ngyuen Huu Tho and other senior Front figures, and toured several of Diem's strategic hamlets.

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[86] Wilfred Burchett, *ibid*, p 38.
[87] Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, pp 253 & 255.
[88] *Ibid*, p 255.
[89] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 69.
[90] Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 273.
[91] Wilfred Burchett, *Vietnam: Inside Story of the Guerilla War*, p 192; & *My Visit to the Liberated Zones of South Vietnam*, p 29 & *The Furtive War*, p 30.
[92] Wilfred Burchett, *Vietnam: Inside Story of a Guerilla War*, p 72.
[93] Wilfred Burchett, *My Visit to the Liberated Zone of South Vietnam*, pp 14 & 68.
[94] *Ibid*, p 44.
[95] *Ibid*, pp 45-54.

In the Lia Dinh district, on Saigon's outskirts, the Diem regime had established 283 strategic hamlets, intended to "form a belt of human armour around the city." However, Wilfred found that the NLF had dismantled 50 of the hamlets, and their former inmates were returning to their traditional villages. But at Tan Thant Tay hamlet, within earshot of Saigon, the sight was sorrier. Its inmates resembled "Aushwitz victims." They had huts but no trees or ponds, and instead of tilling their fields in the cool of the evening, sat "dejectedly." He noted that the cadres were openly welcomed, but the inmates cursed the Saigon troops. They imposed exorbitant taxes, inflicted beatings, and stole the women.[96] The Diemists had lost the battle for the people's hearts and minds. Indeed, Wilfred mooted, it was an unwinnable campaign to begin with. In attempting to "isolate" the people from the Front, the Diemists and their American advisers had not realised they were "one and the same thing." The Front, Wilfred contended, had been formed to defend the people's interests, and their traditional roots and lands.[97] It was an organically seeded movement and an expression of the people's will to fight the Diemists and the Americans.

Wilfred also learned of the change in the war's course that occurred in January 1963. Ap Bac is situated 40 miles south of Saigon in the Delta, and it was there that the South Vietnamese Army's crack Seventh Division - with helicopter and tank support - was routed by the NLF. Sixty-one South Vietnamese troops were killed, as well as three American advisers, in an attack that suggested the limitations of the latter's technology and the superior fighting qualities of the Front's cadres.[98] The head of US military assistance command, General Paul Harkins, dismissed the loss, or talk that the South Vietnamese Army had no stomach for the fight. Within months Diem was tottering, as Buddhist bonzes protested in the streets of Hue and Saigon against the regime's Catholic bias. The Americans urged Diem to conciliate, but he intensified the repression, and by June pictures of self-immolating bonzes on Saigon streets were flooding into western papers. In November, Diem and Nhu were killed in an American-organised coup.[99]

Nguyen Huu Tho told Wilfred that the coup was an unexpected bonus. For all Diem's faults, Tho emphasised, he established "an army, an administration and . . . [a] political machine with all the reins of power in his hands." He had also instituted a repressive network, which had severely weakened the activities of his opponents. However, in removing Diem and Nhu, the Americans had dismantled this structure and created a power vacuum for the new administration under General Nguyen Khanh. According to Tho, the Khanh Administration, in neither having Diem's repressive powers or a class base, was incapable of filling the breach. The balance of forces, therefore, had shifted, irreversibly, in the Front's favour.[100]

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[96] *Ibid*, p 37.
[97] *Ibid*, p 83.
[98] See Stanley Karnow, *op cit*, pp 276-279.
[99] Wilfred Burchett, *Vietnam: Inside Story of a Guerrilla War*, p 87.
[100] *Ibid*, pp 210-220.

Wilfred again visited the NLF South in November 1964, for several months. By this time the Americans had 25,000 advisers in the South.[101] However, in January three of the Saigon Strategic Reserve battalions were routed at Binh Gia. According to Wilfred, the battle heralded the commencement of the US escalation of the war, culminating in the deployment of American ground troops in March. As Wilfred perceptively noted, the escalation had come about because the NLF had won the first stage of the war against the South Vietnamese forces.[102] During another interview, Tho suggested that the Americans had the wrong notion of this type of warfare. According to Tho, the war would not be won by "sending top-rank [US] strategists, . . . highly-trained troops and ultra-modern arms", but by "the human factor."[103] As Wilfred would later explain to George, the Americans, in being forced to increasingly fight on the Front's term, lacked "the morale . . . to stand up to the little people who [were] defending their own soil, . . . homes, villages and families."[104] Subsequent events vindicated Wilfred and Tho's opinions.

In March Wilfred left the South and travelled to Djakarta, where Sukarno was hosting the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Afro-Asian Conference. Chou was in attendance, and with American ground troops disembarking at Da Nang, pressed Wilfred for the latest news on the war.[105] Wilfred's treks across Vietnam's frontiers were obviously bolstering his reputation on the left. Over time, they would also earn him begrudging respect from the right.

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By the mid-1960's Wilfred and Prince Norodom Sihanouk had established a solid working relationship. It had commenced during Wilfred's visit to Cambodia in March 1956. At the time, the touchy Sihanouk had barred most western correspondents from Cambodia, but granted Wilfred a visa. His and the Prince's politics were in accord. Both cautiously eyed American intentions in the region, distrusted liberal democracy, and supported neutrality, peaceful co-existence and de-colonisation. Wilfred, though, was an idealist, while the Prince was a pragmatist, who juggled allegiances to maintain power and Cambodia's sovereignty. He was mindful that Cambodia, like Laos, was wedged between communist North Vietnam and nearby China, and American-backed South Vietnam and Thailand.

Wilfred's visit was the first of three that he made to Cambodia during the next two years. They were chronicled in *Mekong Upstream*. Though one of the first notable books on Cambodian life and politics, it was also another of Wilfred's intrepid traveller tales. Aware that Cambodia was largely untouched by the pen, he sought to "introduce" its people "to those who like the author had only discovered them."[106] They were another of Wilfred's 'lost tribes', and he crossed into Cambodia with

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[101] *Ibid*, p 225.
[102] *Ibid*, pp i-ii.
[103] *Ibid*, p 240.
[104] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Phnom Penh, 20 December 1965; BP SLV
[105] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 285; and the letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, undated, BP SLV.
[106] Wilfred Burchett, *Mekong Upstream*, p vii.

his traveller's eye peeled for exotic details and adventure. There were odd fruits and peculiar natural phenomena, and the thrills of an elephant stampede and tiger hunt, all of which added a romantic flourish to Wilfred's Cambodia.

There was also Angkor Wat. Located outside Siem Reap in the country's north-east, it had been pieced together between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, and constituted the peak of Khmer civilisation. By the 1400's Khmer power was in decline, and Angkor was finally conquered and sacked by armies from Siam in 1431. A French naturalist, Henri Mouhot, had stumbled upon it in the 1860s. Fifty years on, the *Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient* commenced restoring the site. By the 1950s, Angkor was still largely inaccessible to all bar the more audacious travellers. For Wilfred, it housed a telling tale about the folly of kings, who in building for themselves and the gods had impoverished their people and the surrounding land. Khmer's kings, he noted, had shunned "the deeply-rooted democratic humanist tradition" at the core of the culture. They had forgotten that "[i]t [wa]s the sufferings of the people that cause[d] the sufferings of Kings and not their own grief."[107]

Wilfred's Sihanouk was a contrast to the more damning characterisations of the Prince that had featured in the western press. Wilfred's was not the womanising, champagne-sipping playboy of the neutral world, or the shrill-voiced Machiavellian, but the embodiment of the Khmer "democratic humanist tradition", which had transformed the feudalist into a "progressive" people's prince.[108] In early March 1955, with elections pending, Sihanouk had abdicated to become a politician. The move came amidst disagreement between him and the National Assembly over constitutional reform. Sihanouk wanted to introduce women's suffrage and bolster the King's power at the Assembly's expense. As Sihanouk had enacted the constitution in 1947, he felt that he had a right to alter it as he saw fit. Thus, to confront his enemies, and consolidate his power, Sihanouk vacated the throne, formed the *Sangkum Reastr Niyum* - or the Peoples' Socialist Community - and contested the September election. According to *Sangkum's* electoral blurbs, it sought to "attain the aspirations of the Little People", as well as eradicate "injustice, corruption, exactions, oppression and treason."[109] Of course, the latter crop could be used to isolate and suppress the Democrats, Liberals and the left-wing *Pracheachon* or People's Group, all of whom opposed Sihanouk. Three days before the poll, the Democrats leader, Keng Vanansak, was imprisoned. He was finally released when *Sangkum* had secured power, with a staggering 83% of the vote.[110] The result ensured that *Sangkum's* national congress, as distinct from the National Assembly, would become Cambodia's decision-making body, with Sihanouk entrenched at the helm.[111]

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[107] Cited *ibid*, p 74.
[108] Sihanouk had unexpectedly ascended the throne in 1941, on the death of King Sisowath Monivong. Monivong's eldest son, Monreith, an officer in the French Army, had been favoured, but French authorities considered Sihanouk a more pliable option. Subsequently, Sihanouk campaigned for Cambodian independence. See David Chandler's *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, pp 14-15 & Milton Osbourne, *Sihanouk Prince of Light Prince of Darkness*, p 15-27.
[109] David Chandler, *ibid*, p 79.
[110] *Ibid*, p 83.

Wilfred, however, seemed blind to *Sangkum's* excesses. He admired strong, one-party democracies that supposedly served the interests of the people, as distinct from liberal ones, which protected the stakes of elites. Wilfred considered Sihanouk a "strong and flexible" leader who, like Wingate, was prepared to change with circumstances.[112] Wilfred was also attracted to the Prince's foreign policy. The US had been pressuring Cambodia into joining the anti-communist SEATO. But, to the Americans' annoyance, Sihanouk had signed trade and economic agreements with the Soviet Union and China. On Wilfred's arrival in Phnom Penh, he noted that the Americans were attempting to undermine Sihanouk. They had courted his cousin, Prince Monsieth, and the banished Democrat, Son Ngoc Thanh, who had joined forces with the US-backed Khmer Serei on the Thai border. Furthermore, the US Air Force frequently violated Cambodian airspace, whilst American diplomats openly denigrated Sihanouk and Cambodians, in general.

While in Phnom Penh, Wilfred attended *Sangkum's* Third Congress. The US Ambassador, Robert McLintock, was also present, though briefly. He had a reputation for attending Sihanouk's official functions with his dog, and seemed to share the sentiment of the embassy's *Charge d' Affaires*, Godley, that Cambodians "ha[d] only just come down from the trees."[113] The Congress had just passed a motion, on Sihanouk's urging, to accept aid from, and establish diplomatic relations with, the Soviet Union. Unlike US aid, the Soviet's was not conditional on extraneous conditions, such as membership of SEATO. Amidst cheers from the various delegates, Wilfred noted that McLintock turned his back on Sihanouk and stalked out of the Congress. To Wilfred, it was a sign of *Sangkum* and the Prince's political pedigree. "Despite the feudal trappings", Wilfred considered "the Congress . . . truly democratic and the authentic will of the people."[114] When he returned in January 1957, to attend the Fourth Congress, he noted that its views had tilted further to the left under Sihanouk's guidance. He directed rather than dictated the agenda, Wilfred added, and was edging the nation onto "a new stage . . . [of] political development."[115]

During the ensuing years, Wilfred usually visited Cambodia whilst *en route* to more pressing stories. This would change, however. On the completion of his first trek into NLF territory, Wilfred returned *via* Phnom Penh and met with Sihanouk. He presented the Prince with documents from the NLF's President, Nguyen Huu Tho, which contained intelligence on the activities of the Khmer Serei, and a map detailing Front-held areas along the South Vietnamese border.[116] Undoubtedly, the delivery of the documents further endeared Wilfred to the Prince.

In March 1965, Wilfred discussed with Sihanouk the possibility of settling in Phnom Penh to be closer to the Vietnamese frontier. Wilfred had also tired of Moscow life and its winters, which had

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[111] *Ibid*, p 92.
[112] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, p 151.
[113] David Chandler, *op cit*, p 87.
[114] Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, pp 183-184 & 186
[115] *Ibid*, p 203.
[116] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 223.

exacerbated his back ailment.[117] As Sihanouk was well aware of Wilfred's past support for his regime, he agreed. In early September the Burchetts left Moscow, and took up residence in the bungalows at the rear of Phnom Penh's Hotel Royal.[118] As Wilfred told George; "I put my faith very much in a prince who has shown himself to be far more forward looking and progressive than many so-called democrats and even representatives of the revolution."[119]

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Wilfred was a regular visitor to North Vietnam. He was there in February 1966, and again in April and May, gathering material for a series of articles and a book on the affects of US bombing on the North. The raids had commenced in August 1964, escalating in March 1965 with the commencement of Operation Rolling Thunder. Intended to break the resolve of the North Vietnamese through an eight-week run of intensive bombing, Thunder continued until November 1968, during which - on average - 800 tons of explosives were dropped daily on the North.[120] Though Hanoi, the nearby port of Haiphong, and the Red River Delta were affected, the bombing mostly concentrated on the region to the immediate north of the 17th Parallel.[121] In response, the DRNV Government mobilised the population, positioned effective anti-aircraft batteries, and instituted civil defence programs. Administration and production facilities were decentralised; shelters, trenches and tunnels were dug; and supply lines from China and the Soviet Union, and to the NLF in the south, were kept open. Johnson and his advisers, the Pentagon's strategists, and General William Westmoreland had completely underestimated the North's ability to absorb the bombing.

Wilfred considered it a fruitless strategy. The war, he felt, would not be won by air assaults but ground troops.[122] He noted to George that "the country [wa]s organised in such a fabulous way that nothing . . . the American do . . . can bring [it] to its knees"[123] The bombings had not halted production or the movement of supplies. As at Diem Bien Phu, goods moved at night, not day, often over floating bridges, and along improvised roads and tracks, which had replaced bombed ones. Authorities told Wilfred that harvests had risen by 14% in bombed areas, while 23% of the total rice crop was now stockpiled.[124] Morale, too, had risen. The Government had warned the people to "prepare for the worst", and they had heroically responded, "organis[ing] in a manner without precedent", and "in a spirit of self-sacrifice and patriotism."[125] This war, he reckoned, would be a test of character, not

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[117] Wilfred. later wrote that he tired of the restrictions placed on western correspondents who, unlike himself, were more critical of the Communist Party's line. See *At the Barricades*, pp 223 & 227. In September 1963 Wilfred attended the Asian clinic in Bucharest for treatment on his back, but to little avail. See the letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Bucharest, 20 September 1963; BP SLV
[118] For details of Wilfred's departure from Moscow his letter to George, 20 December 1965; BP SLV.
[119] Letter Wilfred to George Burchett, 21 November 1965, Phnom Penh; BP SLV.
[120] See Stanley Karnow, *op cit*, p 468.
[121] In the village of Vinh Moc, a few miles north of the Parallel, the villagers lived in underground tunnels for six years. The author visited the tunnels in February 1994, and was taken through the tunnels by a DRV veteran.
[122] Wilfred Burchett, *Vietnam North*, pp 26-27.
[123] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Phnom Penh, 8 May 1966; BP SLV.
[124] *Op cit*, pp 57 & 59.
[125] *Ibid*, pp 7 & 60.

technology; and, as he explained to George, the Americans usually wilted "when confronted with people of steel nerves . . . [who] look[ed] them squarely in the eyes."[126] In a telling line to George, he declared, "[i]t is those who fear death and flinch at the last moment, who can't face the steady eyes and guns of the defenders who die."[127] Defensive wars, Wilfred contended, "against enemies vastly superior in numbers, equipment and technique", were part of the Vietnamese heritage.[128] Those Vietnamese involved in this current conflict fought "to complete the work of their fathers and elder brothers."[129] They were etching their place in a proud tradition.

But the "indiscriminate" nature of the bombing angered Wilfred. With his photographer, Roger Pic, Wilfred toured bomb-damaged towns and villages. He told George that their findings certainly disproved the US military's contention that "only 'non-civilian targets' had been attacked."[130] Wilfred also heard of the raids in August 1965 that had struck eight hospitals, including a leprosarium, a tuberculosis sanatorium and an old people's home. The North Vietnamese had "thought that the big red crosses on the roofs were sufficient protection."[131] Whilst in Hanoi, Wilfred interviewed several captured American pilots, who had been shot down over Hanoi, and was horrified at their lack of remorse and unshakeable belief that their actions were justified.[132] Their attitudes, he added, suggested "that there [was] one law for the rich and another for the poor, one for white and another for coloured people."[133] As with Korea, Wilfred considered Vietnam another of America's Asian race wars.

Wilfred also interviewed senior figures in the VPA, including Giap and Pham Van Dong. Pham told Wilfred that the VPA and NLF were fighting for "real peace and . . . independence", and would press on until victory, no matter what the cost. Wilfred, however, queried Pham on the North Vietnamese terms for a negotiated settlement. Pham responded: the unconditional halt to the bombings and all other acts of war; the recognition of the NLF as the "authentic voice" in the South; the implementation of the 1956 Geneva Agreements; and the reunification of the country without foreign interference.[134] Such remarks were certainly noted in the US and Europe, where politicians and diplomats were bandying various secret peace initiatives. Wilfred's contacts on the communist side of the frontier were about to transform him into the War's most influential journalist.

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[126] *Ibid*, p 10.
[127] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Hanoi, 21 February 1966; BP SLV.
[128] Cited *ibid*, p 118. Also see the letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, Phnom Penh, 20 December 1965; BP SLV.
[129] *Op cit*, p 156.
[130] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 7 February 1966; BP SLV.
[131] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 21 February 1966; BP SLV; & *Vietnam North*, p 23.
[132] *Ibid*, p 42.
[133] *Ibid*, p 49.
[134] *Ibid*, pp 164 & 172.

Chapter 8 A Journalist of Influence

Alison Selford was a member of the British Communist Party. When she lunched with the Lord Privy Seal, Lord Longford, at the House of Lords in 1965, she had been out of the party for eight years. Yet, as she explained to His Lordship, ending one's affiliation was "not always a simple matter."[1]

On 20 September Selford wrote to Longford about the disturbing case of her one-time communist colleague, Alan Winnington. He was living in East Berlin, "but through no wish of his own." Though she had not seen nor heard from him, Selford assured His Lordship that she had been reliably informed of Winnington's disillusionment with the party and communist life in general. He was miserably homesick, apparently "a broken man", and certainly "in no stable condition to give the British Government any further trouble." But he was concerned that "if he came back, the Government would prosecute him for treason." Selford asked Longford to approach the Wilson Government about Winnington's current legal status.[2]

In mid-October, Longford wrote to the Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, with a proposition. His Lordship suggested that Winnington might be told that the Government would give "no formal undertaking" on the likelihood of future proceedings against him, though the possibility was "remote." New evidence might emerge after his entry, or perhaps a "private prosecutor" might initiate proceedings against him. But, His Lordship added, Winnington could be advised that the risk of these eventuating was "remote and one he might reasonably take."[3]

But Stewart had his reservations. He remembered Winnington as an alleged interrogator and beater of British prisoners-of-war in Korea, and suspected that his activities were treasonable, despite the contentious legal argument of whether "loyalty to the United Nations" constituted "loyalty to Britain." Stewart also suggested that Winnington's re-entry, without a thorough investigation into the allegations against him, carried the potential to undermine the authority of the Treason Act. As a result, Stewart ruled that "an extended examination" of the case be undertaken before responding to His Lordship's letter.[4]

Opinions varied amongst Foreign Office officials on what to do with Winnington. J S Champion argued that Winnington's propaganda value far out-weighed the problems associated with attempting to prosecute him. For starters there was the probability that Winnington might be found not guilty. Champion was of the opinion that Winnington's Korean activities "brought him within reach of

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[1] The conversation with Lord Longford was mentioned in a letter from Alison Selford to his Lordship, 20 September 1965; FO 372/8021.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Letter from the Lord Privy Seal, Lord Longford, to the Secretary of State, Michael Stewart, 12 October 1965; *ibid.*
[4] For details of Stewart's concerns about Winnington's re-entry, see E W Battersby's confidential memorandum, 19 October 1965; *ibid.*

the law of treason." But he noted that on investigating the case in 1955, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) had found "that there [was] insufficient evidence for a prosecution even if he wanted one." So, Champion had no objection to Winnington's return. He even thought that the Government could exploit its obvious propaganda potential, casting Winnington as a disillusioned, "broken exile", glad to be out of communism's clutches, and back in a new, forgiving Britain.[5] It was not the advice that Stewart was particularly after. He wanted a rigorous reassessment of the case, and so turned to an earnest Foreign Office legal adviser, Eileen Young.

Young was a stickler for the letter of the law, but with enough common sense to acknowledge the spirit in which it was meant. She thought Winnington had "given aid and comfort" to the King's enemies in Korea, and so could be charged with treason. In reaching her conclusion, Young challenged the notion that an act by a British national against a United Nations' peacekeeping force, which involved British troops, was not treasonable, because it was not specifically against the interests of Britain. Young based her position on the 1951 statement in the Commons by the then Attorney-General, Hartley Shawcross, in which he declared that the law of treason applied to "collective actions" on behalf of the United Nations, "as it [did] to an ordinary war." She also noted Shawcross' view that Winnington was "probably guilty of treason . . . and could be prosecuted if he were brought back to England." Young recommended that the case should be thoroughly re-examined, to establish whether Winnington had acted only as "a pro-Communist reporter", or had interrogated prisoners in an intimidating manner, and "on behalf of the Chinese", to extract "false confessions." However, she cautiously added that due regard should be paid to the severe penalty for treason. Under the Treason Act of 1814, death was the mandatory punishment for those found guilty. Young suggested that this might explain the reluctance of the DPP in 1955 to pursue Winnington. She warned that if Longford's suggestion was adopted, and new evidence of Winnington's treacheries was to emerge after he re-entered Britain, then "we could be placed in a very embarrassing position." It might be safer for all concerned, if Winnington remained behind the Iron Curtain.[6]

She also discovered that the DPP's decision had probably not taken into account testimonies of US Air Force aviators, who had been communist captives in Korea, and allegedly suffered at Winnington's hands. The testimonies had been given to US military authorities, and although Young did not overly elaborate on their contents, she considered them potentially damaging indictments of Winnington's guilt. Of particular interest was the testimony of Neilson, who claimed that Winnington, during "an interrogation period, actually perform[ed] the function of a Communist interrogator along with Chinese interrogators." The other testimonies, though "less conclusive", were damaging enough. She thought that it was inconceivable that the DPP or Attorney-General, on viewing this evidence, would have decided against prosecuting Winnington. Consequently, she argued that it was necessary

[5] Confidential memorandum by J S Champion, 3 November 1965; *ibid.*
[6] Confidential memorandum by Eileen Young, 12 November 1965; *ibid.*

to establish whether these testimonies had been viewed in 1955 and, if not, did they now constitute new grounds for proceeding against Winnington.[7]

In the meantime, a senior Foreign Office official, Eric Battersby, had called on Scotland Yard. Battersby recalled that during the original investigation the Yard had gathered evidence on Winnington's Korean activities from returned British soldiers. He also suspected that the Yard had "a report from Australian sources" which mentioned Winnington. His visit confirmed his suspicions, and he gleaned that the Yard had, "in general terms", provided the DPP and Attorney-General with intelligence on Winnington's visits to communist prison camps in North Korea. On examining this evidence, however, the DPP had concluded "that no useful purpose would be served by further enquiries, and that a *prima facie* case did not exist." But Battersby suspected that the more detailed "information" from the Australians had not been seen by either British intelligence, the Attorney-General or the DPP.[8]

There was now the realisation amongst those concerned with the case that Winnington could be successfully prosecuted and condemned to death. Young, particularly, seemed torn between the professional requirement to pursue the matter to its legal hilt and the humanitarian pull to drop the case completely. She guardedly noted, "no useful purpose would be served by further inquiries." But she was also determined to establish the grounds for the DPP's original decision. As there was no trace of the American airmen's "depositions" amongst the Foreign Office's papers, she surmised that all of the evidence had not been placed before the DPP. With the inclusion of the American and Australian material, she now held that there was "no legal obstacle to a successful prosecution."[9]

In mid-December, Young sought the advice of the current DPP, Norman Shellhorn. She detailed the findings of his predecessor and revelations contained in the "testimonies from certain US servicemen." She asked whether they had been considered in 1955 and, if not, did their presence alter the "previous opinion."[10] Shellhorn's response was totally unexpected. Although he was unclear about the grounds for the 1955 decision, he had reviewed the aviators' statements, and examined the "relevant documents" from security and "a report from US Army Intelligence", in framing his decision. Presumably, the latter was FEC's dossier on Burchett and Winnington, which it had sent to the Australian Government in July 1954. If so, Shellhorn's findings were a vindication of the dossier's legal insubstantiality and an indictment on the validity of the airmen's testimonies that comprised it. He advised Young that the new evidence "[did] not alter the conclusion previously reached" and, as a consequence, there were no grounds for prosecuting Winnington. In reaching his conclusion, Shellhorn stressed that it did not undermine the "applicability of the law of treason to acts directed against the UN while it so engaged in collective enforcement." In other words, Winnington's case had

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[7] *Ibid.*
[8] Memorandum by Eric Battersby, 19 November 1965; *ibid.*
[9] Memorandum by Eileen Young, 30 November 1965; *ibid.*
[10] Memorandum entitled "Alan Winnington", undated; *ibid.* The memorandum was presumably forwarded to Shellhorn with Young's letter of 21 December 1965.

been judged on its legal merits and found wanting. Shellhorn informed Young that he had "no objection to a message along Longford's lines being passed onto Winnington."[11] On 31 January 1966 the Foreign Office requested that Winnington proceed to the British Embassy in Prague, where he would be issued with an Emergency Passport.[12]

While Winnington was free to go home, his Korean War collaborator, Wilfred Burchett, was still barred. Unlike their Australian counterpart, the British Labor Government was not embroiled in the Vietnam War, and so was free to legally judge Winnington's case on its merits. In contrast, the Menzies and Holt governments had other, more secretive, agendas based on political necessities rather than legal niceties. Wilfred would walk the Strand long before Melbourne's Collins Street. Nevertheless, he could take heart from Winnington's victory. Once barred doors were slowly beginning to open and, as Wilfred was about to find, by the most unlikely doorkeepers.

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The Australian Ambassador to Cambodia, Noel Deschamps, held an enviable position in the mid-1960s. In April 1965 the mercurial Sihanouk had severed diplomatic relations with the US. Trouble had been brewing for some time, as Sihanouk courted neutrality and China at the expense of American aid - with its associated conditions - and SEATO. Sihanouk was worried about CIA assistance to his opponents, the Khmer Serei. He was also wary of the Americans' supporting role in border incursions by South Vietnamese forces, and enraged by criticisms of his private life in the American press. In retaliation, he had refused to accept the credentials of the newly arrived American ambassador, Kiddier, in late 1964. So it was no surprise when diplomatic ties were finally severed, and Deschamps was asked by the Americans to look after their affairs in Phnom Penh.[13]

But in mid-1966, the Americans ignored Deschamps and approached his close friend at the British Embassy, Leslie Fielding, on a delicate and urgent matter. There were grave fears in Washington for the welfare of American prisoners held in Hanoi. As there had been no formal declaration of war, the North Vietnamese Government maintained that American prisoners were war criminals and not prisoners-of-war. By early July, rumours were rife in diplomatic circles that they "might be brought to trial and executed."[14] In Hanoi, the British Counsel-General, Bryan Shepherd, had watched with trepidation as American prisoners were paraded through the streets to the courts. He immediately warned London that the prisoners were likely to "be subjected to a sort of public trial aimed at producing 'confessions.'"[15] The Johnson Administration was understandably keen to locate

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[11] Letter from the Director of Public Prosecutions, Norman J Shellhorn, to Miss E W Young, 26 January 1965; *ibid.* For details of FEC's dossier see Chapter 7, "The Traitor."
[12] See the internal minute to Miss Polak, 31 January 1966; *ibid.*
[13] In the author's interview with Deschamps on 9 September 1999, he emphasised that he was senior, in diplomatic terms, to Fielding.
[14] Letter from H K Mathews, the British Embassy, Moscow, to D F Murray, South East Asia Department, Foreign Office, 13 July 1966; FO 371/186387. These fears were expressed in a meeting of the British, French, West Germany and American ambassadors in Moscow.
[15] Telegram from the British Consul-General in Hanoi, Bryan Shepherd, to the British Foreign Office, 9 July, 1966; *ibid.*

reliable intermediaries prepared to approach Hanoi on the matter, and Shepherd was an obvious though reluctant choice. He told London that he was "severely limited" in what he could achieve on behalf of the Americans, and recommended that the International Control Commission would be a better "go-between." But the Americans persisted with Shepherd, as well as their own embassy in Vientiane, the International Red Cross and other, less orthodox channels.[16]

In early June the US embassy in London asked the Head of the Foreign Office's South East Asian Department, Donald Murray, to seek Burchett's assistance through the British embassy in Phnom Penh. With the Americans well aware of the Australian Government's contempt for Burchett, they presumably preferred not to place Deschamps in a potentially embarrassing situation. Murray was understandably sceptical about the approach, and perhaps a little miffed with the prospect of journalists encroaching on diplomatic territory, especially one with such disreputable *bona fides*. He dismissively noted, "we see no value in making contact with this person."[17] Murray warned American embassy officials in London that "however delicately the approach was made, Burchett might disclose it immediately for propaganda purposes, and the propaganda slant he would put on it might well prejudice the other attempts now in train."[18] Despite his reservations, Murray instructed Fielding to find a suitable intermediary to approach Burchett. But Sihanouk's banishment of western correspondents from Phnom Penh had presumably exhausted Fielding's list of prospective candidates, and he could find nobody for the job. He contemplated filling the breach himself. Murray cautioned him to first clear the matter with his "Australian colleague" before approaching Burchett.[19]

By 26 June the Americans were growing restless and asked the British High Commission in Canberra if Fielding had made "any progress." Apparently the US Ambassador-at-large, Averrell Harriman, was "pressing for action."[20] Harriman was in-charge of the operation, and unbeknown to the British had been seeking an intermediary of his own to approach Burchett since early June. The ambassador had asked the American embassy in Hong Kong to compile a list of locally-based American journalists who would have no "qualms over appearing to act as an agent of the US Department of State . . . and . . . c[ould] be relied upon to keep their mouths shut for as long as necessary." Furthermore, they had "to be in Sihanouk's good graces and hence have access to Cambodia." On the embassy's list were the *New York Times'* Harrison Salisbury and Stanley Karnow, Robert Shaplen of AP and Seymour Topping, amongst others. Karnow was favoured for the role. He

[16] Telegram from the British Consul-General in Hanoi, Bryan Shepherd, to the British Foreign Office, 9 July, 1966; *ibid.*
[17] Secret telegram entitled "Intermediary in connexion with prisoners-of-war", from Murray to de la Mare, 10 June 1966; *ibid.*
[18] Secret minute by D F Murray, 20 June 1966; *ibid.*
[19] For details of Fielding's inability to locate a suitable intermediary, see the secret telegram from Sir David Trench, Hong Kong, to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Foreign Office, undated; *ibid.*
[20] Secret telegram from the British High Commission in Canberra to D F Murray, South East Asian Department, Foreign Office, 26 June 1966; *ibid.*

was currently in Hong Kong, the embassy noted, and had recently been in Phnom Penh, where he had spoken at length with Burchett.[21]

Nothing came of the Karnow approach - if indeed there was one. Instead, the US State Department advised Murray that it had decided to use the Hong Kong-based Shaplen to contact Burchett. Shaplen had been visiting New York when Harriman unexpectedly called and asked if he knew the Australian. Shaplen explained that he had first met him in the Pacific during the Second World War and, more recently, had often sought his views "on matters pertaining to communist strategy and tactics" in Vietnam. Initially, Shaplen had "some misgivings" about the partaking in State Department business, but was finally swayed by the operation's humanitarian concerns. Harriman instructed him to use the facilities at the Australian Embassy in Phnom Penh to keep in touch. This posed no problems, as Shaplen was already well acquainted with Deschamps, and had greatly assisted the ambassador during his early days in Phnom Penh. But he never disclosed to Deschamps the nature of his visit or indeed the contents of his communiques. Presumably, he too did not want to compromise the ambassador or jeopardise the operation with unnecessary chatter about Burchett's involvement.[22]

On 14 July Fielding informed London that Shaplen had "arrived in Phnom Penh and contacted Burchett with surprisingly good results." Shaplen had found the Australian "gruff" but pleasantly mannered, and revelling in the prospect of "behind the scenes conspiracies." As with Shaplen, Burchett "agreed to take up the question on humanitarian grounds", though Harriman had added some attractive inducements. As Shaplen later confessed, "I was to tell Burchett that a visa to the US would be forthcoming and that we would try to persuade the Australian Government to grant him a visa too." But Burchett seemed unmoved, or perhaps was a touch suspicious at his sudden good fortune. A presumably relieved Fielding advised his superiors in London that the Australian had "made no mention of any reward for himself."[23]

In return Burchett was to inform his communist contacts that the US Government would consider a suitable *quid pro quo* for the release of the prisoners in Hanoi. The Americans were prepared to offer a reciprocal exchange of prisoners or medical supplies as their part of the deal. On 13 July Shaplen wrote a letter, detailing the American's offer, which Wilfred promptly delivered to the NLF's representative in Phnom Penh, Tran Bui Kiem. Within two days Kiem had responded in what seemed the usual uncompromising anti-American rhetoric. Of particular concern was Kiem's reference to the American prisoners as "criminal nationals." But once the hostile formalities were completed, Kiem's rhetoric softened, and he assured Shaplen "that I look with sympathy on your initiative, in the

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[21] "Telegram from the Hong Kong Emabssy to the State Department", 9 June 1966; US National Security Council Archives (NSC), reel 1/0289.
[22] Robert Shaplen, *Bitter Victory*, p 234; & the author's interview with Noel Deschamps on 9 September 1999, in which he stated that he knew nothing of the mission.
[23] Telegram from Leslie Fielding, British Embassy, Phnom Penh to the Foreign Office, London, 14 July 1966, *op cit*; & Robert Shaplen, *ibid*, pp 235-236.

cause of good relations between our two countries." Kiem added that the "prisoners [would] be returned to their families", but failed to disclose when this would occur.[24]

Nonetheless, Kiem's overture was treated with guarded optimism. Fielding, in particular, was pleasantly surprised. He told London that although Kiem "did not say anything of substance", the tone of his letter was "unexpectedly friendly." Burchett, however, was more circumspect. He warned Fielding and Shaplen that Kiem's letter was "purely an interim response", penned without proper authority. Wilfred stressed that the NLF's real position would only become apparent after the matter had been considered at the Front's headquarters and in Hanoi.[25]

Shaplen quickly cabled Harriman from the Australian embassy, requesting authorisation to thank Kiem for "understanding the humanitarian aspects of the problem." As Shaplen was about to return to Hong Kong, he recommended Kiem be advised that further messages could be forwarded to Burchett. He would ensure that they reached the proper authorities. Shaplen also wanted to ensure that Kiem was aware that the request, though coming from a "private person", was authorised by the US State Department.[26] Harriman agreed, and on 18 July Burchett dutifully delivered Shaplen's thanks and recommendations to Kiem.[27] Wilfred reported back that they had been "well received."[28]

Burchett's efforts had impressed Shaplen, and he was keen to keep the Australian's services. Before his scheduled departure on 20 July, Shaplen again cabled Harriman, reassuring him that Burchett was "still friendly." Wilfred had told Shaplen that despite Kiem's positive reaction, he was probably "not convinced that this [was] a *bona fide* approach." Wilfred offered to make further inquiries when he ventured behind the NLF's lines in August.[29] Shaplen thanked him, and reiterated that his efforts would not go unrewarded. Later Shaplin confided to Harriman: "I made it clear to [Burchett] that we would be glad to help him personally in some way without mentioning money or any other specific *quid pro quo*." Harriman was also aware that Shaplen had suggested Burchett visit Hong Kong to discuss the operation, if necessary. Being a British colony, Shaplen had told Fielding too. The latter was presumably relieved to learn that "Burchett did not particularly react to [the suggestion], except to take note."[30]

But Deschamps was still none the wiser about the operation, even though he was planning a visit to Washington where he would be feted by his good friend, Harriman, and briefing State Department officials on US interests in Cambodia. The Americans had decided that Burchett's role was to be kept from Deschamps and the Australian Government, a realistic assessment given its past

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[24] Letter from Robert Shaplen to Tran Bui Kiem, Phnom Penh, 15 July 1969; FO 371/186387.
[25] Confidential letter entitled "US prisoners in North Vietnam", from Leslie Fielding, British Embassy, Phnom Penh, to D Murray, Foreign Office, London, undated; *ibid.*
[26] Telegram from Shaplen to Harriman, 15 July 1966; *ibid.*
[27] Telegram from Harriman to Shaplen, 16 July 1966; *ibid.*
[28] See Leslie Fielding's letter to D F Murray, "US prisoners in North Vietnam"; *op cit.*
[29] Cable from Shaplen to Harriman, 19 July 1966; *ibid.*
[30] See Leslie Fielding's letter to D F Murray; *op cit.*

sensitivity about the journalist. The British were no less secretive, particularly after Shaplen's departure, when Fielding assumed overall responsibility for the Phnom Penh side of the operation. Fielding was in a sticky spot, being faced with the likelihood of Burchett's request for a visa to Hong Kong, and the seemingly inevitable prospect of explaining his and Burchett's activities to Deschamps. On 20 July Fielding asked Donald Murray in London for "early contingent instructions" in the event of Burchett requesting a visa.[31] Murray forwarded the request to the Colonial Office, which administered Hong Kong's affairs. He still considered Burchett an "undesirable." Nevertheless, he recommended that because of the Australian's "connexion with the question of American prisoners we should like to see any request for such a visit by him granted", unless the Colonial Office had "some strong objection."[32] It had none. On 29 July, London advised Fielding that if Burchett was to be granted a visa to Hong Kong, Deschamps should be informed beforehand, unless Fielding had "some objection."[33] Wilfred never took up Shaplen's invitation, and so Deschamps remained unaware of the operation, and Wilfred's role in it.

In early August, Donald Murray visited Washington, where he and the British ambassador, Sir David Trench, met with Robert Miller, the head of the State Department's Vietnam Working Group. Miller seemed concerned about the strength of the Foreign Office's commitment to allow Burchett into Hong Kong if he needed to talk with Shaplen. Murray reassured him that Burchett would be granted a visa, though he suspected it would be used to sample the pleasantries of Hong Kong life rather than for its intended purpose. Miller was obviously curious about the Australian's involvement, and asked Murray if the British were surprised by Burchett's co-operation. Murray admitted that he had "expected [Burchett] to be far more resistant and . . . likely to make propaganda out of the fact that he had been approached." On the contrary, the diplomat had found Burchett - notwithstanding his politics - a reasonable man who could keep a confidence. With this in mind, Murray asked Miller if he objected to Burchett running an errand for the British.[34]

A British engineer, William Wallis, went missing during a boating trip down the Mekong River in early 1965. Wallis' wife initially attempted to locate her husband through the International Red Cross, and when this proved unsuccessful, turned to the British Foreign Office. Murray thought that Burchett's NLF contacts might have information about Wallis and could hopefully secure his release. By mid-September Fielding had approached Burchett who, in turn, promised to contact Kiem. But Wilfred cautioned about the prospects.[35] He had just returned from behind the NLF's lines, where he had inquired into the standing of the American prisoners and "got nowhere", though he had gleaned that the Front considered the prisoners "administratively a nuisance", and was reviewing all aspects of

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[31] Secret telegram from Leslie Fielding, British Embassy, Phnom Penh, to the Foreign Office, London, 20 July 1966; *ibid.*
[32] Memorandum from D F Murray, Foreign Office, to W S Carter, Colonial Office, 27 July 1966; *ibid.*
[33] Secret cable from the Foreign Office to the British Embassy, Phnom Penh, 29 July 1966; *ibid.*
[34] Memorandum entitled "US prisoners-of-war in North Vietnam and Mr Wallis" by D F Murray, 1 August 1966; *ibid.*
[35] *Ibid;* & telegram from Fielding, the British Embassy, Phnom Penh, to D Murray, Foreign Office, 12 September 1966; *ibid.*

their detention. They had been widely dispersed, and required "special food" which was carted in for them. Nonetheless, the Front was not prepared to negotiate, indirectly or otherwise, on their release. The Americans might misinterpret this as a lessening in the Front's "resolve to fight on."[36] So, hopes of securing Wallis' release also diminished. In early October Wilfred told Fielding that the Front had grown "very suspicious and cautious." The release of prisoners was now conditional on the acceptance of broader "political considerations." As the Americans were disinclined to meet the latter, the fates of the former seemed - for the present - ominously sealed. Fielding informed Murray that "we can ask Burchett to do no more for the present."[37]

By late October, the Americans were attempting to negotiate "directly" with the North Vietnamese Government on the release of the prisoners. The effort floundered, because Hanoi made the releases conditional on Washington's recognition of the NLF as the sole authority in South Vietnam. As this was totally unacceptable, the Americans were forced to rely, once again, on less orthodox intermediaries like Shaplen and Burchett. Shaplen had informed Harriman of his willingness to participate in any future ventures, and both were keen to retain Burchett's services. Harriman had found him "reliable and discreet." He suggested that Shaplen should remind Burchett of "our interest in having him serve as an intermediary on prisoners", and to inquire if he had "anything further to report on American prisoners or any other matters of interest." As with Murray, Harriman had found Burchett a reasonable man who could be entrusted with a confidence. As the need for dialogue between the two protagonists increased, so too did Wilfred's influence. By the beginning of 1967, he was perhaps the world's most sought-after Australian, and pressure was mounting from the most unlikely of people to bring him in from the cold.[38]

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In late 1966 Wilfred travelled to Hanoi with Harrison Salisbury. While America's foremost Catholic crusader, Cardinal Spellman, toured the South, preaching that US troops were defending God and civilisation, Harrison Salisbury's Christmas despatches from the North suggested otherwise. In Nam Dinh he wrote of "block after block of desolation." Houses, schools "and every other variety of non-military facility" had been destroyed, and the same was the case in Hanoi.[39] His reports, which appeared in the *New York Times*, discredited White House and Pentagon denials of civilian deaths, and assertions of the military specificity of targets. To deflect criticism, military spokesmen emphasised the inevitability of civilian casualties and collateral damage in target areas where people lived alongside strategic sites such as roads, railway stations and trucking terminals. But the French newspaper, *Le Monde*, accused the Johnson Administration of "flagrant lying" over its past denials on casualties, while in London the *Daily Express* ruefully remarked on the White House's "tarnished

[36] Secret telegram from Fielding, the British Embassy, Phnom Penh, to D Murray, Foreign Office, 12 September 1966; *ibid.* This should not be confused with the above telegram from to Fielding to Murray. This was the second telegram sent on 12 September.
[37] Letter from Leslie Fielding, Phnom Penh, to Donald Murray, Foreign Office, 3 October 1968; *ibid.*
[38] Cable from the US State Department to the Bangkok and Saigon embassies for Shaplen; Lyndon Johnson's NSC papers, reel 12, p 169.
[39] Harrison Salisbury, "US raids in North batter two towns", *New York Times*, 27 December 1966.

reputation as a source of truth." The Tory *Daily Telegraph*, however, was more forgiving, condemning Hanoi for disregarding the safety of its civilians which, it suggested, was "consonant with both the Oriental and the Communist character." But the *Telegraph* was amongst the minority, as Pope Paul VI, members of the Commons and the British Foreign Secretary, George Brown, chorused their concerns about Salisbury's findings.[40]

Wilfred could take some of the credit for the appearance of Salisbury's despatches. He was responsible for ensuring Salisbury's passage to Hanoi. The latter would later write to Wilfred, expressing his gratitude "for the aid and assistance that you were able to give in presenting my case to the Vietnamese authorities." Salisbury added; "I am sure that the basic element in persuading them that this would be an appropriate thing to do was your own personal representation."[41] But Wilfred also had a personal stake in Salisbury's visit. Salisbury's despatches validated Wilfred's earlier reports on the non-military nature of the bombing, and once more proved the potency of the written word when crafted as a political weapon. As Wilfred explained to Rainer and George: "Harrison said what I have been saying for a long time, but it is much more important that it is said in the *New York Times*." Personal kudos was a minor, albeit pleasant after-thought. For Wilfred the primary consideration was "the result." His was a marginalised voice, always accompanied with the qualification of his communist affiliation. Salisbury spoke to mainstream America and its elites through the *Times* and, as Wilfred rightly contended, therefore had the greater clout.[42]

Salisbury's visit was also part of a superbly orchestrated peace offensive by the North Vietnamese Government, in which the Americans were convincingly cast as the aggressors. By January Hanoi was rife with rumours of secret peace initiatives. In a private audience, Ho had confided to the Bishop of Chichester, Ambrose Reeves, the veteran American peace activist, the Reverend A J Muste and Rabbi Abraham L Feinberg that Johnson was welcome in Hanoi, as long as he did not come "with a gun at his hip." Ho had also told Egon Lutz of *Nurnberger Nechrichten*, "if the US was prepared to give up its policy of aggression and to withdraw its troops from Vietnam we will gladly invite them to dinner."[43] The North Vietnamese leader had also seen American peace emissaries, Harry S Ashmore and William C Baggs, whilst Pham van Dong tantalised Salisbury during an interview with subtle suggestions of a softened line on the possibility of talks. Salisbury left convinced that if the Americans stopped bombing the North, Hanoi would reciprocate with "military concessions."[44] But the problem of reciprocity would plague the hawks and doves on both sides long after Salisbury had left Hanoi.

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[40] "Criticism of US in Britain, the *New York Times*, 29 December 1966.
[41] Salisbury's remarks were contained in a letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 7 February 1967; BP SLV.
[42] See the separate letters from Wilfred to George and Rainer Burchett, 19 January 1968; BP SLV.
[43] A short account of the meeting was published in David Kraslow and Stuart H Loory's *The Secret Search for Peace*, pp 162 & 164.
[44] For details of Salisbury's remarks to Colvin see *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam; The Negotiating Volumes of the Pentagon Papers*, (ed) George C Herring, pp 410-411.

By far the most important of the purported peace overtures came during Burchett's interview with the North Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Nguyen Duy Trinh, on 28 January. Trinh told Burchett that neither the North Vietnamese Government nor the NLF would be cowered by "blatant acts of [American] aggression." In a barbed challenge, he suggested that if the US desired talks, "it must first halt unconditionally the bombing raids and all other acts of war against the DRV."[45] Wilfred remembered the interview, which appeared in the *New York Times*, as the fulfilment of a journalist's dream; "an exclusive . . . with the right man at the right time and place on the most burning question of the day."[46] It certainly did not go unnoticed in the west. In a secret meeting in Paris Robert Kennedy discussed its significance with the French Foreign Ministry's Director of Asian Affairs and Burchett confidant, Etienne Manac'h, and North Vietnam's Parisian envoy, Mai Van Bo, who re-emphasised the importance of Trinh's remarks. So too did the Soviet Union's Prime Minister, Alexei Kosygin, when he arrived in London on 6 February for talks with his British counterpart, Harold Wilson. They were hoping to broker a deal that would bring the warring parties to the peace table, and were understandably cheered by Trinh's comments.

However, the more hawkish members amongst Washington's power-brokers, such as the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, the presidential adviser, Walt Rostow, and the State Department's expert on Far Eastern Affairs, William Bundy, did not place such dovish interpretations on the interview. They viewed it, along with Hanoi's other so-called peace feelers, as propaganda initiatives designed to undermine public support for the war in the US. On 30 January William Bundy, on the authority of Rusk, cabled the US Embassy in Moscow, suggesting that Trinh's remarks were "an all-out effort to build-up public pressure on us to stop the bombing in return for talks." Bundy urged that before the Americans stopped, they needed to be reassured that Hanoi would make a reciprocal gesture. Of particular concern to Bundy, was North Vietnam's continued "infiltration of men and materials southwards", which made the prospect of negotiating "a settlement difficult if not impossible." As Kosygin and Wilson were due to commence talks on the war in London, Bundy urged his colleagues in Moscow to ensure that both were aware of the North Vietnamese "infiltration", and the Americans' opposition to it.[47]

On 2 February Johnson publicly reinforced Bundy and Rusk's concerns in a televised press conference, declaring that talks were not simply dependent upon the cessation of the bombing, but also on the need for reciprocity from Hanoi. De-escalation, he inferred, was a joint responsibility. All he required was "any indication of reciprocal action." None was forthcoming, suggesting that neither side was yet prepared to make the necessary military concessions so as talks could commence. Yet Wilfred read it differently, believing that Trinh was probing Washington's sincerity for talks.[48]

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[45] For the complete text of Burchett's interview with Trinh, see Herring, *ibid*, pp 422-424.
[46] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 237.
[47] Cable from the Secretary of State (drafted by William Bundy) to the US Embassy, Moscow, 30 January 1967; in Herring (ed) *op cit*, pp 424-425.
[48] Cited in Kraslow and Loory, *op cit*, pp 180-182; & see Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 237.

While Kosygin and Wilson attempted to broker a diplomatic solution in London, the hawks in Washington were plotting another round of bombing. On 8 February, the traditional four-day ceasefire came into effect for the celebration of Tet. American intelligence reports, however, alleged that the DRV were taking advantage of the cease-fire to increase the flows of men and equipment into the south, thereby increasing the communists' capability "to undertake combat operations at a substantial level." For Rusk and Rostow, this signified the DRV's real objective. On 9 February Rusk warned that Hanoi "must not expect us to stop military action by bombing when they continue it by invasion."[49] Pentagon strategists speculated, with some justification, that "Hanoi preferred the sword to the conference table." The strategists suggested that the "Trinh interview" and its associated peace feelers "seem[ed] to signal less an attempt to get the bombing stopped and/or to talk than to find a more effective political posture from which to prosecute the war." In other words, Hanoi was "increas[ing] its reliance on fighting and propaganda" at the expense of seeking a negotiated settlement.[50] From the strategists' perspective, Burchett's interview with Trinh, Salisbury's confronting despatches from Hanoi, and the representations of the numerous peace envoys, were merely aiding and abetting Hanoi's propaganda campaign in the west.

But there was an intriguing aside to Wilfred's stint in Hanoi. Whilst Wilfred courted Trinh, he was being courted by the Americans. Dean Rusk was aware of Wilfred's access to the DRV and NLF leaderships, and of his past representations on Harriman's behalf concerning American prisoners-of-war. While Wilfred was in Hanoi, Rusk sought his assistance through the British Foreign Office in London. The Johnson Administration and NLF had been secretly exchanging prisoners during January. Though the exchanges were numerically insignificant, the Americans were keen to convey their gratitude to the Front, and express their desire for the exchanges' continuation. Rusk asked the Foreign Office to pass this message on to Wilfred for delivery to his NLF contact. Rusk explained to the British that normally the Australians handled US affairs in Cambodia, but "they prefer to avoid contact with Burchett." The Secretary of State urged that the message should be conveyed without publicity and before the four-day Tet holiday ceasefire, beginning on 8 February.[51]

On 3 February Fielding was asked by the Foreign Office to "renew" his contact with Burchett.[52] By 7 February, Burchett had advised Fielding that he had made "'the best possible arrangements' for conveying the message."[53] On this occasion Wilfred's contact was the NLF's representative in Hanoi, Nguyen Van Tien. The receipt of the message coincided with the release of another two American prisoners, Crofts and Wormack, by the NLF. By 21 February neither prisoner had been sighted, and fears were held for their safety. The State Department, *via* the British, asked Wilfred to help locate them. He immediately contacted Tien, who was "equally concerned" for their

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[49] Cited Kraslow and Loory, *ibid*, p 204.
[50] For an analysis of the Pentagon's interpretation of the Trinh interview see "DRV Responses, Verbal and Military", in the "Discussion" of Operation Sunflower; Herring (ed) *op cit*, pp 394-395.
[51] Secret cable from Dean Rusk, undated and unaddressed; FCO 15/632.
[52] Secret cable from the Foreign Office, London, to the British Embassy, Phnom Penh, 3 February 1967; *ibid.*
[53] Secret cable from Leslie Fielding, Phnom Penh, to the Foreign Office, London; *ibid.*

welfare. Shortly afterwards, the prisoners walked, unharmed, into an American base on the outskirts of Saigon. The US Embassy in London asked the Foreign Office to tell Burchett of the prisoners' arrival.[54]

In the interim, the US had resumed bombing the North, destroying Wilson and Kosygin's peace initiative. Neither side was committed to talks, and so resorted to burying their differences on the battlefield. Wilfred, understandably, was angered at the resumption of the bombing, but silent on the American rationale behind it. Perhaps he felt cheated. While he was working to secure the release of the American prisoners, Rusk was plotting further aerial offensives against the North. Wilfred might have reflected on Rusk's instruction to convey his message by the beginning of the Tet ceasefire, as on 14 February the bombing recommenced, ending for the foreseeable future any hopes of establishing dialogue between the two sides.

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In late January 1968, Saigon was celebrating Tet, and enjoying the tranquillity of its accompanying cease-fire. The festivities, however, were abruptly curtailed. During the early morning of 30 January, communist cadres audaciously raided the US Embassy in central Saigon. Six-and-half hours later, the embassy had been secured, but in the meantime print and television journalists had transmitted stories and pictures of the attack to viewers and readers throughout the world. Within days, American television audiences had watched the chilling street execution of a Viet-cong prisoner by the chief of the South Vietnamese police force, Nguyen Ngoc Loan. Within a week it was apparent that the communists had secured a major propaganda victory.

The offensive, falling within the cease-fire period, had caught the American and South Vietnamese forces off-guard. All of South Vietnam's major cities were attacked, as well as 36 of the country's 44 provincial capitals, and another 65 district towns.[55] In Hue communist forces held the city for three weeks, and brutally purged it of those with even the most tenuous links to the South Vietnamese Government. But the offensive was a military failure. It was one in a series of offensives planned by the Communist Party's Central Committee in January 1967 - around the time of Burchett's interview with Trinh and the other peace initiatives. The series began in the following September with raids on isolated American garrisons along the Cambodian and Lao borders. By November it was concentrated in the mountains around Pleiku, and by mid-January 1968 had moved to the remote US base at Khe Sanh, perched in the Demilitarised Zone. The offensives climaxed during Tet. The communists hoped that the Tet attacks would spark popular insurrections throughout the country, but the people did not rally, nor did they stoutly defend the Ky-Thieu administration. Tet's costs, though not insurmountable, were sufficient enough to prompt a reconsideration of communist strategy. The revolution did not shift from the countryside to the towns and cities, as the communists had thought,

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[54] Secret cable from the Foreign Office, London, to the British Embassy, Phnom Penh, 24 February 1967, *ibid.*

[55] Gabriel Kolko, *Vietnam: an Anatomy of a War*, p 308

and despite Tet's much-touted propaganda impact, an offensive of its magnitude was not attempted again.

Wilfred once suggested that the North Vietnamese Government and NLF wanted to negotiate from a position of military strength. During 1966 and 1967 communist officials had repeatedly told him that that they were not prepared to enter negotiations until the military balance sheet had turned in their favour. The offensives of 1967 and 1968 were meant to achieve that. Instead, they revealed the communists' shortcomings in the cities, and sapped the NLF's strength in the countryside. With the failure of the offensives to bring overall victory, the NLF and Hanoi were forced to the negotiating table.

So too were the Americans, who were riven between a military keen on continuing the war, and a growing anti-war movement pushing to end it. The Tet Offensive had cost hawkish American militarists dearly, not to mention the Johnson presidency. Tet was the watershed of their war. Suddenly, it was economically unsustainable, worsening the national debt and fuelling fears of a run on the dollar. The economy could not support further military commitments. The seizure of the *USS Pueblo* by the North Koreans in the week preceding Tet suggested that the country's military capability was stretched to its limit. While military chiefs were debating whether to transfer 49,000 troops from Vietnam to meet escalating tensions on the Korean peninsula, the offensive broke, and Johnson realised that America had reached the limits of its power. In late February Johnson, in the face of plunging personal popularity, rejected Westmoreland's call for another deployment of 206,000 troops for Vietnam. On 12 March, the president watched with some trepidation as the *peacenik* Democrat senator, Eugene McCarthy, snared a menacing 42% of the vote in the New Hampshire primary. And there was Robert Kennedy in the wings, with his anti-war crusade, still mulling over whether he would be a candidate for the presidency in November.

On 31 March Wilfred was in Hanoi's Reunification Hotel. With him were the American writer, Mary McCarthy, peace activists, Baggs and Ashmore, and CBS journalist, Charles Collingwood, amongst others. Wilfred remembered hearing that Johnson had ordered a stop to all air and naval attacks on the North, and was instructing his ambassador-at-large, Averrell Harriman, to commence talks on ending the war. The group quickly adjourned to the bar for a celebratory drink. Three drinks later they were told that Johnson would not be seeking re-election. Presumably they drank till dawn.[56]

On 6 May Wilfred arrived in Paris for the commencement of the peace talks. He was covering them for the radical New York *Guardian* and, on Collingwood's recommendation, the conservative CBS. It was an odd marriage of the marginal with the mainstream, and a sign of the growing acceptability of anti-war sentiments and their opinionators. Fortunately, Wilfred had mentioned to French officials the possibility of obtaining a visa in September 1966. It was during De

[56] For details of the evening, see *At the Baricades*, p 258.

Gaulle's visit to Phnom Penh, where he made his landmark speech on the merits of Sihanouk's neutrality and urged Johnson to vacate Vietnam. Given De Gaulle's position, a visit by Wilfred was unlikely to alarm the French Government. Indeed, a member of De Gaulle's Cambodian entourage had apparently whispered to Wilfred that he was free to visit France whenever he wanted. A visa could be hurriedly arranged, the official added, within 24 hours.[57]

The Paris Wilfred entered was in tumult. The streets of the Latin Quarter were barricaded and tainted with tear gas. Students of the 'New Left' were rioting, specifically about educational inequality, but generally against all established authority. As Wilfred wandered behind the barricades, he was struck by the students' confusion, their lack of leadership, and the mindless vandalism of their protest. To Wilfred, whose radicalism was wrought by the Depression, this was rebellion without any apparent structure or ideology. He remembered a group of protestors standing around a rubbish bin earnestly debating about whether to torch it. In the end they did, and Wilfred pondered the purposelessness of the act. Unlike the 'Old Left', the 'New seemed amorphous, prepared to overturn established authorities, but offering nothing workable in their place. Not surprisingly, 'Old' and 'New' leaders denigrated each other. In Wilfred's old newspaper, *L'Humanite*, the Communist Party boss, Georges Marchais, insultingly called the student leader, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a "German-Jew." The latter retorted, slighting Marchais as "Stalinist scum."[58] The 'Old Left' - and Wilfred - would be forever tainted, it seemed, by their Stalinist legacy. Though Wilfred had politically mellowed, he felt a greater allegiance to the old's discernible order, than the seeming disorder wrought by the Cohn-Bendits, who were stealing the limelight from more important matters at the *Centre de Conferences Internationale*.

As the rioting continued, the talks commenced at the *Centre*, and by the second week they were bogged down in tit-for-tat condemnatory rhetoric on the recurring issue of reciprocity. But Wilfred had carved his niche. Having access to the North Vietnamese and NLF delegations made him an indispensable contact for western correspondents and diplomats alike. Furthermore, his work for the Americans and British had opened some unexpected doors, especially as Harriman was leading the American delegation. Charles Collingwood arranged a meeting over lunch at the Hotel Grillon, and Harriman brought along his aide, Donald Davidson. Harriman promptly thanked Wilfred for his past assistance, while Wilfred reassured the American that he was not in Paris as an "official spokesman" for the North Vietnamese. Wilfred remembered it as "an agreeable, stimulating and useful conversation", and warmed to Harriman, considering him a man of integrity who earnestly sought peace.[59]

Also in Paris was Leslie Fielding. He had been transferred from Phnom Penh, and was now the Vietnam desk officer at the British embassy in Paris. He and Wilfred lunched on 26 May. By this time the talks were well and truly stalled, and a luncheon companion with contacts on the other side

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[57] See the letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 8 September 1966; BP SLV.
[58] See Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 254; & Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle: the Ruler, 1945-1970*, p 531.
[59] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, pp 256-258.

must have seemed an alluring prospect to Fielding, particularly as the British were having difficulty in reading the North Vietnamese mind. He found Wilfred in expansive form and, as always, willing to share his views on the other side. To overcome Fielding's difficulties, Wilfred suggested he should rummage through the statements of the North Vietnamese delegation, looking for changes in nuance that could indicate shifts in their negotiating position. This, he emphasised, was particularly important during the present "propaganda stage" of the talks. Though it would pass, Wilfred warned that the talks would be protracted, as the North Vietnamese considered they had less to lose from prolonged negotiations than the Americans did. The North had interpreted Johnson's speech in March as an indication of the US intention to disengage from the conflict. Thus, the communists arrived in Paris feeling that they held the upper hand. They were under less pressure to make concessions than their American counterparts, and there also was the matter of "face." Wilfred told Fielding that the North Vietnamese commenced the negotiations without their "prior requirement" - the cessation of bombing - being met. As a result, they would lose "face" if they made further concessions while the bombing continued. Fielding probed Wilfred on the nature of the concessions that the Americans could expect if the bombing was stopped. But Wilfred was non-committal, merely suggesting that the North Vietnamese would become "less rigid." On his return to the embassy, Fielding informed London of his luncheon chat. Once again, Wilfred had proved his worth. Perhaps he was endearing himself to the British, hoping for their assistance in overcoming his travel problems. But Wilfred liked the diplomatic gossip. He was always more forthcoming in private than in print, away from the often rigid dictates of the causes he espoused, and especially with Fielding, whom he had obviously grown to trust.[60]

The American delegation was also experiencing difficulties. To overcome the rhetorical wall that divided the sides, the Americans proposed less formal, private talks in more convivial surroundings. The matter had been raised by Rusk, who considered that "progress was unlikely as long as exchanges remained public."[61] In private, the delegates would have to talk to each other rather than play to the crowd. As a result, the Americans introduced coffee breaks in the hope of engaging the other side. But a disappointed Davidson told the British that the North Vietnamese were not prepared to "talk shop," though they had accidentally let slip "that there were North Vietnamese elements in the south."[62] But they were not keen on informal dialogue. They held the upper hand - or so it seemed - and presumably thought that prolonged, well-publicised talks would work in their favour, particularly on the propaganda front. There was no propaganda value in a private chat over coffee.

Behind the scenes Wilfred was again at work. He and the French Government had attempted to convince the North Vietnamese on the value of "private meetings", but as the British noted, their

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[60] Confidential telegram from the British Embassy, Paris to the Foreign Office, London, 28 May 1968; FCO 15/728.
[61] See the telegram from Sir Philip Dean, the British Embassy, Washington, to the Foreign Office, 11 June 1968; FCO *ibid.*
[62] Telegram from the British Embassy, Paris, to the Foreign Office, London, 22 June 1968; & the telegram from the British Embassy, Paris, to the Foreign office, London, 21 June 1968; FCO 15/744.

efforts were "brushed aside."[63] But the lack of informal dialogue worked in Wilfred's favour. He generously gossiped, especially to Fielding, about the North Vietnamese. Fielding was told of their respect for the "quality of the American delegation", and of Chinese and Soviet machinations "behind the scenes." According to Wilfred, the Soviets were allowing the North Vietnamese the use of their "secure communications facilities." Wilfred also confided that the North Vietnamese considered the talks, in their current phase, as paying "great propaganda dividends and that world opinion was broadly on their side."[64] In public, of course, Wilfred blamed American intractability on the bombing for stalling the talks. But in private it was a different matter. The truth was a lot more complex than Wilfred's public pronouncements let on. But he came from a school which taught that the word was a weapon, and the good of the cause determined the contents of the story. Like the North Vietnamese, Wilfred also played, at times, to the crowd.

Amongst his crowd were western correspondents and, as in Korea, Wilfred was always mindful of ensuring they were aware of the other side's position. Those correspondents, whom the American delegation considered recipients of Burchett leaks, included Stanley Karnow of the *New York Times*, Hedrick Smith of the *Herald Tribune* and the *New Statesman's* Gloria Stewart.[65] Indeed, Burchett and Karnow organised reciprocal dinners for western and communist journalists, but as Fielding lamented, "nothing transpired of substance at these get-togethers."[66] But it was Wilfred's way of ensuring that both sides were aware of the other's point of view and, more crucially, that the North Vietnamese position was known in the west. Wilfred's job was made easier by the dearth of news, and the curiosity of western correspondents in the North Vietnamese delegation. Fielding noted that American press briefings "attract[ed] less interest than those of the North Vietnamese."[67] As a consequence, Wilfred had an eager market for his leaks. Without doubt, he was the most influential journalist at the talks. The London *Daily Mirror*, in a begrudging tribute, called him "The Most Courted Odd-ball in Town." It claimed that journalists and diplomats alike were "falling over themselves" to get Burchett's opinion, the latest of whom was the doyen of American liberal columnists, Walter Lippman. But the *Mirror* warned that Burchett was "still an unofficial public relations man for the North Vietnamese."[68] It was a convenient press tag that he would never shake off. The reality, however, was different, and far too complex for the tabloid mind. Wilfred worked both sides of floor, and had earned the respect of serious journalists, and British and American diplomats. Furthermore, he was about to be rewarded for his efforts.

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[63] See confidential memorandum entitled "Vietnam: The Paris Peace Talks" by D F Murray, 5 June 1968; *ibid.*

[64] Confidential letter from Leslie Fielding, British Embassy, Paris, to Richard Fygis-Walker, South East Asia, Foreign Office, London, Undated; *ibid.*

[65] Telegram from the British Embassy, Paris, to the Foreign Office, London, 29 May 1968; FCO 15/743.

[66] See the confidential from Fielding to Fygis-Walker; *op cit.*

[67] Telegram from the British Embassy, Paris, to the Foreign Office, London, 29 May 1968; *op cit.*

[68] "The Most Courted Odd-ball in Town", the London *Daily Mirror*, 17 May 1968.

Before Wilfred's departure from Phnom Penh he had inquired at the British Embassy about the possibility of obtaining a British passport. His query was referred to the Foreign Office in London. Phnom Penh had recommended that it be favourably considered, reminding London of Wilfred's "unrivalled access to the Communist leadership", which could prove invaluable during the forthcoming talks. Phnom Penh added that Wilfred would also be indebted to the British, and "prepared to do everything possible in return."[69]

The request was passed on to the appropriate authority, the Foreign Office's Nationality and Treaty Department, where it was sympathetically considered before being rejected. Some officials had agreed with the embassy's recommendation, but others thought that it could create tension with the Australian Government.[70] The latter group rightfully considered Wilfred an Australian citizen, under that country's *Nationality and Citizenship Act* of 1949, and therefore had no claim to a British passport. Interestingly enough, if there had not been an Australia mission in Phnom Penh, and Wilfred "had to travel urgently", the matter would have been different. The Department was prepared to cast Wilfred as "a Commonwealth citizen", and grant him a temporary passport for six months to assist his travels. As there was Australian representation in Phnom Penh, the Department, though sympathetic, had no option other than to deny Wilfred's request.[71]

Wilfred again raised the question, along with the possibility of obtaining a British visa, during his lunch with Fielding. On this occasion Wilfred explained that he wanted to see his son, Rainer, renew acquaintances with his step-daughters, Ruth and Renate, and take up with the relevant authorities the likelihood of a British passport. Wilfred assured Fielding that his visit would not be used for political profit, and so Fielding advised him to apply for a visa, which immediately posed a problem.[72] Because the British Government did not recognise North Vietnam, a visa for entry into Britain could not be issued on Wilfred's *laissez-passer* document. The Foreign Office feared that if it allowed Wilfred access on a North Vietnamese document, it might create an unwanted precedent. With the Peace Talks taking place across the Channel, the Foreign Office was determined Britain would not be flooded by prospective North Vietnamese propagandists and agitators. Wilfred's only recourse was to enter Britain by entry certificate on a form of affidavit, issued and authorised by the British Embassy in Paris.

On 28 May Fielding advised the Foreign Office of Wilfred's luncheon inquiry. Fielding urged London to begin considering the matter before the inevitable arrival of Wilfred's formal application, and by early June Foreign Office officials were in earnest discussion.[73] Most thought

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[69] Confidential telegram from Mr Brown, the British Embassy, Phnom Penh, to the Foreign Office, London, 8 April 1968; FCO 15/728.
[70] See R Webb's memorandum, Nationality and Treaty Department, 10 April 1968; *ibid.*
[71] D Beard's memorandum Nationality and Treaty Department, 10 April 1968; *ibid.*
[72] For Wilfred's account of his lunch with Fielding see the former's letter to Canon Collins, 14 June 1968; British National Council for Civil Liberties Papers, Hull University, (NCCL HU).
[73] Confidential telegram from Leslie Feilding, British Embassy, Paris, to the Foreign Office, London, 28 May 1966; FCO 15/728.

Wilfred "undesirable" or "unsavoury", though they acknowledged his right to enter Britain on "humanitarian grounds." Others took into account his assistance in the Wallis case, or his contacts with the North Vietnamese, which as one opportunistic diplomat suggested, "we might conceivably need to use . . . at a later stage in the game." Most agreed that Wilfred's potential for "mischief" had diminished, given the public's apathy about the peace talks.[74] All had probably noted the arrival of a cable from Campbell at the embassy in Paris, with news on Wilfred's lunch with Harriman. The American had been "quite impressed by Burchett's personality and apparent reasonableness."[75] The following day Wilfred telephoned the British Embassy in Paris, requesting a visa to visit his family in London during early July.[76]

Donald Murray was worried about the Australian Government's reaction, and so contacted the External Affairs' representative at Australia House. The latter, surprisingly, was not unduly concerned, and told Murray that the Gorton Government was "considering" allowing Burchett "a one-only visit." The Australian confessed that "to the best of his knowledge, there [was] no criminal charge against [Burchett] on Australian files", and no grounds on which to bar him from the country.[77] Presumably, Murray left the meeting convinced that the Australians would not protest against Burchett's entry into Britain, given that they were reconsidering their own position in the light of Burchett's apparent innocence.

Murray then contacted the Home Office to see if it had any objections. He advised that the Foreign Office was "favourably" disposed to the prospect, as Burchett had been "helpful to us in a number of ways through his close relationships with the North Vietnamese." Murray added that there was also "the purely humanitarian considerations of allowing him to visit his family." Though his presence was bound to produce noises from both the right and left, Murray suggested that they would hardly reach "an embarrassing pitch."[78] To counter these, he proposed that a 'Dixer' be asked in the Commons, so as the Government could explain the true nature of Burchett's visit. The Home Office agreed, and so on 21 June the Paris embassy was instructed to issue Burchett with an "entry certifcate" valid for a stay of 30 days.[79]

But a last-minute hitch emerged. Wilfred had not been entirely forthcoming with the authorities on the nature of his visit. In mid-June, he had received an invitation from the recently formed British Council for Peace in Vietnam to address a public meeting in Westminster. As the stated purposes of his visit were to see family and lobby for a British passport, Wilfred was, at first, reluctant

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[74] See the memoranda of Edward Peck, 6 June 1968; D F Munro, 5 June 1968; & P A Wilkinson 5 June 1968; FCO 15/728.
[75] Confidential memorandum from A H Campbell, the British Embassy, Paris, to D F Murray, the Foreign Office, London, 6 June 1968; *ibid.*
[76] Confidential telegram from the Foreign Office, London, to the British Embassy, Paris, 7 June 1968; *ibid.*
[77] See the confidential memorandum from D F Murray, Foreign Office to K Coates, Home Office, 10 June 1968; *ibid.*
[78] Confidential letter from D F Murray to K Coates, 10 June 1968; *ibid.*
[79] Telegram from the Foreign Office, London, to the British Embassy in Paris; 21 June 1968, *ibid.*

to participate. Furthermore, his close friend and colleague, Russell Spurr, had personally sponsored his application, and formally assured authorities that Wilfred would not be participating in political activities. On 19 June Wilfred wrote to one of the meeting's organisers, Canon Collins, explaining that if he addressed the meeting he would be "going back on his word" to those who had supported his application. To circumvent this, he suggested that Collins should formally send him a "letter of invitation" and, on that basis, Wilfred would submit a "fresh application" to the British authorities. But by 21 June he had decided to speak at the meeting without the courtesy of re-applying. He, therefore, would be entering Britain in contravention of the conditions on which his entry certificate had been granted.[80]

On 24 June Wilfred called at the British Embassy in Paris to collect his entry certificate and confessed about his changed plans. Wilfred told embassy officials that he had received an invitation from "several members of parliament" - most notably Labour's Russell Kerr and Emyr Hughes - to address an anti-war meeting, and "felt obliged" to do so. Officials noted "his change of intention", but reinforced that his entry was conditional on the basis of his application. The embassy reported Wilfred's altered arrangements to an unsurprised Murray who had learned of them from "other sources." Murray was obviously a measured man, not easily flustered, and he thought that Wilfred's presence at the meeting would not create a stir. Vietnam was not prominent in the press, other than in the communist *Morning Star*, and Murray felt that the meeting was unlikely to capture headlines. Murray also thought that Wilfred did not want to damage his hopes of securing a British passport, and so was unlikely to do anything "we could not cope with or might find embarrassing."[81]

On 25 June Wilfred arrived at Heathrow Airport. When the Immigration Officer asked about the reasons for his visit, Wilfred stated the official line, and then "voluntarily" produced an invitation to address the anti-war meeting. The Immigration Officer "discreetly" warned Wilfred that this would breach the conditions of his entry, and give grounds to exclude him. Wilfred blustered that he would be "definitely" addressing the meeting, at which point the Chief Migration Officer, C K Penman, was summoned.[82] Penman had been warned of Wilfred's changed arrangements, and rather than provoke a potentially damaging incident, decided to authorise Wilfred's entry, but "in the terms in which it had been granted." Penman had not been instructed by his superiors in the Home Office to exclude Wilfred. Furthermore, he suspected that the Australian was trying to provoke him into "an illiberal attitude." The following morning Penman was staggered to read in the *Times* that "the Chief Migration Officer told [Wilfred] that he was perfectly 'free' to come to Britain . . . and to speak at meetings." It certainly was not Penman's recollection of the incident. But his hands were tied. Wilfred was too influential to bar, and so bluffed his way into Britain.[83]

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[80] Letter from Wilfred Burchett to Canon Collins, 19 June 1968; NCCL HU.
[81] Confidential memorandum entitled "Wilfred Burchett" by D F Murray, 24 June 1968; FCO 15/728.
[82] Report by R K Taylor, Immigration Officer, 25 June 1968; *ibid.*
[83] Report by C K Penman, Chief Migration Officer, 26 June 1968; *ibid.*

He did speak at the meeting in Westminster's Central Hall, without incident or official wrath. It proved as Murray expected, "a damp squib" that attracted little press coverage except in the *Morning Star*. Murray told External Affairs in Canberra that Wilfred "ha[d] been behaving himself quite well" since his arrival. The Australian had been courted by radio and television interviewers, and spotted "trotting around" Fleet Street. But he was doing "roughly what [the Foreign Office] expected", though he was perhaps a trifle inhibited in his behaviour by the outstanding matter of his British passport.[84]

But perhaps the passport matter had another, less inhibiting consequence: Wilfred's loquaciousness towards members of the Foreign Office. S E Orchard worked in the Foreign Office's Soviet Section. He had met Wilfred on several occasions in Moscow, and was surprised to find him attending a dinner at Chatham House. Seizing the opportunity, he prodded Wilfred on the talks in Paris and other matters, and found him most obliging. Wilfred reiterated that the talks were still in their "sparring" stage, emphasised the North's commitment to liberate the South, warned against overestimating Sino-Soviet influences on the North Vietnamese, and remarked that "the Chinese were capable of making themselves very awkward."[85] Once again, he was more forthcoming in private than print. Murray was impressed by Orchard's fortuitous chat, and noted, "another example of Burchett putting himself forward as a reasonable man."[86] But there was an edge in his comment, hinting that Wilfred was tolerated rather than trusted, and had reached the bounds of his influence.

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Tom Driberg and Wilfred had first met in the late-1940s. At the time, Driberg was a columnist for the *Daily Express*, writing under the *nom de plume* of James Hickey, while Wilfred was one of the paper's correspondents in Berlin. Driberg had left the paper to enter the Commons on the Labour benches. In early June 1968, Wilfred approached him for assistance in securing a British passport.

Driberg had been campaigning for the return of Alan Winnington's full British passport, when Wilfred stumbled upon this in an article by his close friend, James Cameron. Wilfred quickly telephoned Cameron to ask if he could be included in Driberg's campaign. Driberg, however, was reluctant to push Wilfred's case until Winnington's was over. As a precaution, Wilfred had also contacted the General Secretary of British National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), Tony Smythe. After exchanges of letters between Driberg, Burchett and Smythe, the latter agreed to put Wilfred's case before the Home Office.[87]

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[84] Letter from D F Murray, Foreign Office, London, to P A G Westlake, External Affairs, Canberra, 8 July 1968; *ibid.*
[85] Restricted minute from S E Orchard, Soviet Section to D F Murray, 4 July 1968; FCO 15/745.
[86] Departmental note by D F Murray, undated; *ibid.*
[87] See the letter from Wifred Burchett to Tom Driberg, 4 June 1968, & the note of the telephone message from Tom Driberg's secretary stating his inability to campaign on Wilfred's behalf. See also the letter from Tony Smythe, General Secretary, NCCL, to Wilfred Burchett, 11 June 1968; & the letter from Driberg to NCCL, 11 June 1968; NCCL HU.

On 3 July Smythe contacted the Secretary of the Home Office, David Ennals, requesting a meeting to discuss Wilfred's case. Ennals agreed, but was unable attend in person. Instead, he sent a senior officer, Grey, to deal with the matter. Grey told Smythe and Wilfred that their case for a passport was doomed from the start. Wilfred's last British passport had been issued in error and, more importantly, in contravention of the 1949 Australian *Nationality and Citizenship Act*. Smythe limply countered that the error, in being the fault of the British Government, placed "an obligation" on it to compensate Wilfred, particularly as he had been repeatedly denied an Australian passport. Grey was unmoved, though he did soften when Wilfred requested regular visiting rights to see his family in London, while he was working in Paris. On 15 July, Ennals confirmed in writing that Wilfred "had no claim to a British passport", but added, "we have no objection to [him] visiting this country from time to time."

The NCCL was unconvinced and pursued the matter, launching a public campaign. Smythe garnered support from Labour MPs like Foot, Kerr and Whitaker, who were anti-war, mildly leftist and pro-civil libertarian. The *Morning Star* lent its support, as did the British Peace Council and the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), which in conjunction with the NCCL organised a press conference. In preparation Smythe published a pamphlet, "Will you support this man - Wilfred Burchett?" It accused the Australian Government of disowning Wilfred, and its British opposite of evading its "responsibilities . . . behind the excuse he is an Australian citizen."[88] But the press conference was a disappointment. Smythe lamented to the NUJ's Assistant Secretary, Ron Hallet, on the erosion of professional "solidarity", and suspected that Cold War prejudices still prevailed in Fleet Street.[89]

Smythe also raised the matter with the Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, arguing that it had been "inadequately considered" by the Home Office. Stewart was undoubtedly aware of the Australian Government's interest in the campaign. In early July Westlake from External Affairs had quizzed Murray on whether the British were "seriously" contemplating giving Burchett a passport. Murray reassured him that Burchett had "no claim to UK citizenship", and left it at that.[90] The Foreign Office had no intention of granting Wilfred a document to which he was not legitimately entitled. Thus, Wilfred had reached the limit of his influence. Stewart passed Smythe's letter on to MacFarlane at the Nationality and Treaty Department who, on 29 July, reiterated that Wilfred had no claim to a British passport.[91] Smythe persisted, writing again in early August to Stewart, urging his "personal

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[88] "*Will you help this man - Wilfred Burchett?*", NCCL pamphlet, 1968; NCCL HU.
[89] Letter from Tony Smythe, General Secretary, NCCL, to Ron Hallet, Assistant Secretary, National Union of Journalists (NUJ), 24 July 1968; NCCL HU.
[90] See the confidential memorandum from D F Murray to P A G Westlake, 8 July 1968; FCO 15/728.
[91] Letter from D MacFarlane, Nationality & Treaty Department, Foreign Office, to Tony Smythe, General Secretary, NCCL, 29 July 1968; NCCL HU.

attention."[92] Once more, the matter was passed to MacFarlane who re-emphasised that after 1949 "Mr Burchett's position became solely the responsibility of the Australian authorities."[93]

By late September, Smythe had pieced together his strongest argument to date. He admitted that Wilfred's 1950 passport had been erroneously issued. However, at the time of its issue, "the issuing authority" had neglected to inform Wilfred of the new citizenship arrangements. If Wilfred had been informed, Smythe argued, "he could, clearly have obtained United Kingdom citizenship . . . by complying with the one-year residence qualification of the British *Nationality Act*." As Wilfred had been domiciled in Britain since the mid-1940s, and had immediate family in London, Smythe was of the opinion that Wilfred met the residency requirements. Smythe also maintained that since Wilfred was not informed until 1955 of the change in his status, he had been denied the opportunity to become a British national.[94]

MacFarlane was again unmoved. He acknowledged Smythe's claim that Wilfred had not been properly advised of his entitlements in 1950, but countered that Wilfred was also eligible to qualify for British citizenship between 1955 and 1962, when the residency qualification period was increased from one year to five years. As he had not, MacFarlane firmly closed the door on Wilfred's campaign for a British passport.[95] Despite the disappointment, Wilfred had secured his right to enter Britain for family visits, and won begrudging respect from the likes of Fielding and Murray. He had served them well, and was justly rewarded for his efforts.

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In mid-July Alan Winnington set foot in Britain for the first time since 1949. He quickly called on his comrades at the *Morning Star*, before venturing to the *Times* where he denied, once again, interrogating UN prisoners-of-war on behalf of the Chinese. He told of his annoyance at not being "allowed to come back in time to see [his] mother before she died", and he stoutly stated: "I am British, and my roots are here whatever people may think."[96] He was back to reclaim his birthright, and perhaps he also inspired Wilfred to go and reclaim his own.

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[92] Letter from Tony Smythe, General Secretary, NCCL, to the Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, 2 August 1968; NCCL HU.
[93] Letter from D MacFarlane, Nationality & Treaty Department, to Tony Smythe, General Secretary, NCCL, 13 August 1968; *ibid.*
[94] Letter from Tony Smythe, General Secretary, NCCL, to D Macfarlane, Nationality & Treaty Department, 25 September 1968; *ibid.*
[95] Letter from D MacFarlane, Nationality & Treaty Department, to Tony Smythe, General Secretary, NCCL, 11 October 1968; *ibid.*
[96] "Barred journalist back with no regrets", London *Times*, 15 July 1968.

Chapter 9 Reclaiming the Birthright

Of all the roads Wilfred travelled, the one home was his longest and most difficult. His journey began, in earnest, in mid-1959. The Menzies Government had resumed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union after several years in abeyance because of the Petrov affair. Keith Waller had been appointed to head the Australian mission in Moscow. He had first met Wilfred in the early 1940s, whilst serving as a junior secretary on Eggleston's staff in Chungking.[1] On Waller's staff was a youthful Second Secretary, Richard Woolcott. As Waller was unable to immediately assume his Moscow post, Woolcott stepped into the breach.

On 15 July, he received a visit from Burchett, who expressed his delight at the embassy's re-opening, and offered Woolcott assistance in establishing contacts in Moscow. Burchett, who was infrequent contributor to the Melbourne *Herald*, informed Woolcott that he was preparing an article for the paper on the embassy's "re-establishment" and was after some "general information." However, he quickly turned the conversation onto the denial of his birthright. As an Australian-born citizen, he declared his "entitle[ment] to an Australian passport", his children's rights to be "registered as Australian citizens", and his wife's claim to be naturalised. But Woolcott seemed more preoccupied with determining if Burchett intended to visit Australia. Burchett explained that it "depend[ed] on the official Australian attitude to him." Though he would "like to visit", he was "a travelling journalist", and would require assurances he would "be able to depart again if and when he so desired." As Woolcott was not in a position to comment, he referred Burchett's concerns to Canberra. Woolcott also requested "background information" on Burchett, notably "the type of proceedings or action which might be taken against him should i.e return to Australia."[2]

Burchett's request was referred to the Department of Immigration. On 9 September, the Department's Secretary, Sir Tasman Heyes, briefed his Minister, Alexander Downer, on the case. Downer, who had succeeded Holt, was obviously unaware of ASIO's 1954 report on Burchett, the limited possibilities for prosecution, and the doubtful legality of Menzies' decision to withhold the registration of Burchett's children - Peter, George and the recently born Anna - as Australian citizens. Nonetheless, Heyes recommended that "there [were] no grounds for varying the decisions" made by Holt. But Downer seemed keen to form his own opinion and, on 23 September, asked the Attorney-General's Department for ASIO's report on Burchett.[3] It finally arrived in November, typical of the

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[1] Alex Carey, "The Bureaucratic Passport War" in (ed) Ben Kiernan, *Burchett Reporting the Other Side*, p 65. For details of Waller's stint in Chungking see Ken Randall's article, "The Long Road Back to Peking", *Nation Review*, 12-18 January 1973.

[2] Secret memorandum from R A Woolcott, Second Secretary, Australian Embassy, Moscow, to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 3 August 1959; NAA6980/6, item 200614, folio 250.

[3] Department of Immigration minute from T H E Heyes to the Minister, 9 September 1959; *ibid*, folios 264-266. Anna Burchett was born in Mosow on 11 April 1958. See "Application for Registration of Birth Abroad of a Child of an Australian Citizen" for Anna Burchett's date of birth; NAA6980/6, item 5200616, folio 172. Heyes' minute, NAA6980/6, item 200614, folios 264-266. See also the "secret"

deliberate tardiness with which the Government handled the case.[4] Because the report was so "voluminous", Downer requested that a "precis" be written.[5] The dutiful Harold McGinness was given the job, stamping his imprimatur on 'the traitorous Buchett.'[6]

After holidaying in Bulgaria, Burchett returned to Moscow in mid-October and approached Woolcott for developments. Woolcott explained that the matter was still under consideration in Canberra. On Burchett's departure, Woolcott cabled the External Affairs' Secretary, H D Anderson, warning that although Burchett had not "lodge[d] a formal application concerning his passport [or] the registration of his children, his queries would continue and therefore the embassy required guidance."[7] Anderson referred the cable to Downer, who was not prepared to proffer a decision until he had read McGinness' "precis." In the interim, Downer instructed that Burchett be told his case was "receiving attention."[8] Burchett's request was not accorded the common courtesy of a reply, and so the matter, for the time being, lapsed.

By October 1960, Keith Waller had assumed his post in Moscow, which presumably encouraged Wilfred to again pursue the matter. On 31 October he formally applied for an Australian passport and the registration of his children as Australian citizens. Attached to his application was a letter in which he detailed his travel problems, defended his journalistic record, and declared that as an Australian by birth, he had "a legitimate claim" to a passport. Wilfred also explained that as neither the British nor Australian governments recognised his DRV 'Document of Identity', he was unable to visit his 90-year old father in Melbourne or Rainer at Cambridge University. As the denial of his passport stemmed from his alleged activities in Korea, Wilfred requested the "opportunity to answer [the] charges", declaring that his "conscience [was] entirely clear", and expressing his confidence in countering any allegation brought against him.[9]

Waller lent his support to Burchett's application. In a memorandum to Anderson, Waller explained that he had known Burchett for 20 years, and that he was "widely received . . . in [Moscow's] diplomatic circles, and . . . always willing to discuss the local situation frankly and objectively." In

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memorandum from T H E Heyes, the Secretary, Department of Immigration, to the Secretary, Attorney-General's Department, 23 September 1959; *ibid*, folio 256.

[4] See the "secret" Department of Immigration minute from G H Spicer to the Secretary, Department of Immigration, 11 November 1959, *ibid*, folio 267.

[5] See the "secret" Department of Immigration minute from G H Spicer to the Acting Secretary, Department of Immigration, A L Nutt, 21 December 1960; *ibid*, folios 275-277.

[6] See the handwritten note by G H Spicer, Department of Immigration, 1 September 1960; NAA1838/370, item 852/20/4/ 14 RTS, folio 18.

[7] "Confidential" memorandum from C A Woolcott, Second Secretary, Australian Embassy, Moscow, to the Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 19 October 1959; NAA6980/6, item 2000614, folio 257.

[8] "Secret" memorandum from T H E Heyes, the Secretary, Department of Immigration, to the Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 12 November 1959; *ibid*, folio 260. See also the scribbled note by Immigration's Harold McGuiness, attached to Spicer's minute, 1 September 1960, *op cit*.

[9] Letter from Wilfred Burchett, Moscow, to the Department of Immigration, 31 October 1960; NAA6980/6, item 200614, folios 268-270.

addition, Waller had "discussed at length" with Burchett his "conduct during the Korean War", and was "convinced that his position had been misrepresented." Though not prepared to "express . . . [a] view as to the adequacy of [Burchett's] defence", Waller stressed that "it should be kept in mind that he has a defence."[10] However, as Waller would find, the Government was reluctant to offer Burchett the opportunity of presenting it.

On 12 December, External Affairs passed Burchett's application onto Immigration, the Attorney-General's Department and ASIO for comment.[11] Spry was against "any alteration of [Holt's] decision", but Downer was still muddling through McGinness' precis.[12] It contained the standard ASIO stories about Burchett's activities "as a propagandist and spokesman for . . . communist regimes", his efforts "to convert UN prisoners . . . to the communist view", and his role in publicising "'confessions' extorted from some UN prisoners." Despite the damning allegations in McGinness' work, he cautioned Downer that the case against Burchett was "incomplete."[13]

On 27 January 1961, Heyes submitted a prospective course of action to the dithering Downer. Heyes had noted Spry's objection to issuing Burchett with a passport and, instead, floated the possibility of granting the journalist a 'Document of Identity', restricted for entry into Australia. Heyes contended that there was "no administrative reason" for refusing the 'Document', or "any . . . why [Burchett's] children could not be granted citizenship if it were considered desirable" by the Minister. The Secretary even suggested that "Burchett should be permitted to state his case . . . before any decision is made." For a fleeting moment, Heyes seemed mindful that the Government, for its own political ends, had perhaps pre-judged Burchett without hearing his side of the story.[14] But Heyes' advice was ignored, and the matter dragged tardily on.

By mid-February, Burchett had still not been notified about the outcome of his October application, and the matter was now urgent. He was due to cover the Leipzeig Industrial Fair in East Germany during early March for the New York *Guardian* and London *Financial Times*, but his North Vietnamese 'Document of Identity' had expired. As he related to Waller, he doubted if the 'Document' would be "renewed", or "he would be able to obtain [the requisite] Soviet travel documents" to attend the fair. Waller advised Canberra of Burchett's plight, adding that "if no decision [was] taken . . .

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[10] Memorandum from J K Waller, Ambassador, Australian Embassy, Moscow, to the Secretary, Department of External Affairs, 23 November 1960; *ibid*, folio 271.
[11] "Confidential" memorandum from H D Anderson, the Secretary, Department of External Affairs, to the Secretary, Department of Immigration, 12 December 1960; *ibid*, folio 272.
[12] See the "secret" Department of Immigration minute from G H Spicer to A L Nutt, Acting Secretary, 21 December 1960; NAA6890/6, item 200614, *op cit*.
[13] "Secret" minute from the Secretary, T H E Heyes, to the Minister, 3 May 1960; *ibid*, folio 274. "Secret" memorandum entitled "Precis of Attorney-General's Department's File re W G Burchett (Prepared for the information, and by direction, of the Minister for Immigration)"; NAA1838/370, item 852/20/4 14 & 15, folios 16-17.
[14] "Secret" minute from T H E Heyes, the Secretary, Department of Immigration, to the Minister, 27 January 1961; NAA6890/6, item 200614, folios 286-288.

before 25th February" on the latter's passport application, the embassy would grant him a "Document of identity with limited validity", enabling him to visit Leipzeig.[15]

Waller's cable was probably intended to jolt Canberra into a decision. As its arrival coincided with the establishment of an interdepartmental committee to investigate the case, the cable was hurriedly put on the agenda. The committee had been formed to legitimate Burchett's exclusion, not review the evidence against him, or redress the violations of his children's rights. It was impressively qualified, a measure of the Government's determination to bar Burchett. There was the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, Alan Griffiths, his External Affairs' opposite, H D Anderson, the Attorney-General's Cedric Harders, an unnamed ASIO operative, and two assistant secretaries from Immigration, G H Spicer and Dr S J Dempsey. As expected, they decided against granting Burchett a passport or allowing the registration of his children. They also suggested that legal opinion should be obtained from the Attorney-General's Department on an "Australian citizen's right to return to Australia . . . and his entitlement or otherwise to travel documentation to enable this." On the matter of Leipzeig, the committee recommended Moscow be instructed that Burchett was not entitled to any travel document.[16]

The decision angered Waller, but his mood grew stormier on reading Heyes' stunning assertion that "Burchett, considering his history, could get entry into [the east zone of Germany] by documentation from other sources." Unbeknown to Waller, Heyes had suggested to Downer that Burchett had manufactured his request's urgency and, if granted a document restricted for travel to Leipzeig, might "prevail on international travel operators to carry him" to Australia. Downer concurred, and Waller was duly told that Burchett would have to prevail on his "other sources."[17] In a terse response to Anderson, Waller stated that Heyes had "presuppose[d] . . . Burchett was . . . a Soviet agent", a conclusion which was yet to be "established." Even if he was, Waller added, "[Burchett] could not travel to Leipzeig without a passport or some other document of identity." Pointedly, Waller suggested that if there was a "moral as distinct from a legal claim" to deny Burchett his rights, then the government was acting judiciously. But after having heard Burchett's side of the story, Waller questioned if the Government's actions were indeed morally founded and, therefore, unlawful. He reiterated that Burchett was "an Australian citizen by birth, [and] no harm would be done by hearing his version of events in Korea." In Moscow Burchett "represented an important . . . conservative newspaper", and was considered "a journalist in good standing" by all embassies bar the British and American. Waller recommended that Burchett should be issued "a Document of Identity" of 12 months' duration, to "see what he does with it." Furthermore, Waller suggested that he should be

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[15] "Confidential" cablegram from the Australian Embassy, Moscow to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 16 February 1961; NAA1838/370, *op cit*, folio 19. See the also the "secret memorandum entitled, "Inter Departmental Meeting to discuss the case of Wilfred Graham Burchett", NAA6980/6, item 200614, folio 283.
[16] "Secret" memorandum by S J Dempsey, 21 February 1961; *ibid*, folios 284-285.
[17] "Secret" Department of Immigration minute from the Secretary, T H E Heyes, to the Minister, 21 February 1961; NAA1838/370, *op cit*, folios 23-24. See T H E Heyes' departmental minute to the Minister, 27 January 1961; *op cit*.

permitted to inform Burchett that "his conduct during the Korean War ha[d] come under scrutiny and ask him to state his case." Only then, Waller declared, could "a firm decision" be made "on whether or not [Burchett was] to get a passport." In the meantime, Hanoi had granted Burchett a two-month extension on his DRV 'Document', enabling him to attend the Leipzeig fair.[18]

Sometime in February, Heyes advised Solicitor-General Bailey of developments, and asked about the Immigration Minister's power to withhold travel documents from an Australian citizen, issued specifically for the purpose of returning home.[19] Bailey replied that the Minister was not legally obliged to provide such documents. Nonetheless, he cautioned that Australia had supported the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, of which Article 13.2 stated: "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country." Though the *Declaration* was not legally binding, Bailey considered non-compliance could be "used as a basis of criticism in the United Nations or even in Australia itself." But this was a policy consideration and not his specific brief, though he confided that the Attorney-General, Garfield Barwick, thought that in the current "circumstances . . . there seem[ed] to be no advantage to Australia in Burchett's return", and certainly no inclination amongst Government members to "encourage" it.[20] It was a curious comment. Barwick, in the previous September, had strengthened the *Crimes Act* relating to treason. The *Act* now embraced all military actions involving Australian troops, whether under a declaration of war or not, and in all corners of the globe. As Barwick told the House, the amendment was aimed at those "opposed to our forces, and . . . bent on their elimination."[21] No doubt, he had Burchett in mind. Yet, Barwick was disinclined to lure Burchett into an Australian court.

In June A L Nutt, who was acting in Heyes' position, informed Downer of Bailey's advice and the opinions of Menzies, Spry and Barwick. Consequently, Nutt recommended that Burchett should be informed his requests for a passport and the registration of his children as Australian citizens "had not been approved." Downer agreed, and so Nutt asked Anderson to cable the Australian Embassy in Moscow.[22]

For a year Waller simmered over the decision, then, in August 1962, Immigration's S J Dempsey received a scrawled note. An informant in External Affairs had confided that Waller was *en route* to Australia for discussions on the "Burchett case" with the head of External Affairs, Sir Arthur

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[18] "Confidential" memorandum from J K Waller, Ambassador, Australian Embassy, Moscow, to the Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 7 March 1961; NAA1838/370, *ibid*, folios 39-40.
[19] "Secret & Personal" memorandum from the Secretary, Department of Immigration, T H E Heyes to Sir Kenneth Bailey, Solicitor-General, Attorney-General's Department, Undated, NAA6980/6, *op cit*, folios 302-303. Though the memorandum is undated, a margin note indicates it was written in February 1961.
[20] "Secret and personal" memorandum from K H Bailey, Solicitor-General, Canberra, to A L Nutt, Acting Secretary, Department of Immigration, Canberra, 30 May 1961; *ibid*, folios 295-298.
[21] *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 8 September 1960, pp 1020-1033.
[22] See the "secret" minute from A L Nutt, the Acting Secretary, Department of Immigration, to the Minister, June 1961; *ibid*, folios 299-300. The "secret" memorandum from A L Nutt, the Acting Secretary, Department of Immigration, to Mr H D Anderson, the Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra 20 July 1961; NAA1838/370, *op cit*, folio 49.

Tange. Waller, apparently, wanted to know the reasons for withholding Burchett's passport. His journey failed to alter the Government's position. The 'traitorous Burchett' was too well entrenched in Canberra, and so Wilfred's journey home was postponed for the foreseeable future.[23]

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In late 1964, Gregory Clark was a junior secretary at the Australian Embassy in Moscow. With the conflict in Vietnam escalating, Clark was concerned about the scarcity of specialists in External Affairs capable of providing independent analysis on the situation. Clark later criticised the Department for depending on "the most optimistic of the various US assessments available" on the war. Wilfred had just returned to Moscow following another visit to the NLF-controlled South, and offered to brief Clark and other Embassy staff on his findings. Clark subsequently sought permission from Canberra, but the Government, despite its predilection for collecting Burchett's articles, was not interested in hearing his assessment of the war.[24]

But others were curious about Burchett's travels. In early February 1965, Wilfred received an invitation to visit Paris for a series of press interviews on the war. He approached the Moscow Embassy for the "temporary issue of an Australian passport or other travel document." Though his North Vietnamese 'Document' was acceptable to the French, he told Embassy officials that he preferred to travel on Australian papers.[25]

Wilfred had also approached the General Secretary of the Australian Journalists Association's (AJA) Federal Executive, Sid Crosland, for support. Crosland was an advocate of a free press and a guardian against government attempts to nobble it. He considered that journalists had unencumbered rights to travel the globe and ply their trade. Wilfred told Crosland that the Government's denial of his passport had "gravely hampered" his "professional activities", restricting his access to Western publishers and reducing his income. But it was also a matter of principle. Wilfred considered that passports were entitlements, accorded by birthright and not determined by the political prejudices of conservative politicians.[26] Crosland forwarded Wilfred's concerns onto the External Affairs Minister, Paul Hasluck. As Hasluck had once been a journalist and AJA office-bearer, Crosland emphasised that the Government's actions against Burchett contravened the Association's belief in the "free movement" of journalists, and sought to suppress views opposed to Liberal foreign policy.[27] But

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[23] See the handwritten note to Dr Dempsey, 14 August 1962, *ibid*, folio 50.
[24] Gregory Clark, "Vietnam, China and the foreign affairs debate in Australia: a personal account", in *Australia's Vietnam: Australia in the Second Indo-China War*, (ed) Peter King, p 21.
[25] See the cablegram from the Australian Embassy, Moscow to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 2 February 1965; NAA1838/370, *op cit*, folio 54.
[26] Letter from Wilfred Burchett, Moscow, to S P Crosland, General Secretary, Federal Executive of the Australian Journalists Association (AJA), 20 January 1965. Department of Immigration file, *ibid*, folio 116.
[27] Letter from S P Crosland, to the Minister for External Affairs, Paul Hasluck, 16 March 1965; *ibid* folio 117.

passports were not Hasluck's jurisdiction. He advised Crosland that his letter had been forwarded to the Immigration Minister, Hubert Opperman.[28]

'Oppie' was a former champion cyclist and, though popular, was apparently derided by some of his more able colleagues for not being up to the intellectual mark required for ministerial life.[29] This might explain Opperman's tardy treatment of Crosland's letter. When it arrived in March, Opperman was overseas. By June, he had returned, and Crosland, still waiting on a reply, wrote to Opperman.[30] Crosland was still waiting in August, and wrote again, informing Opperman that 92 year-old George Burchett was "fretting and . . . worried that he w[ould] not see his son again."[31]

Apparently Crosland's initial letter was still on the desk of the External Affairs' Secretary, Sir James Plimsoll, who was undoubtedly aware of reservations within his Department about the Government's stance on Burchett. In mid-March, Crosland's letter had been passed to the Department's Assistant Secretary, Defence Liaison, A M Morris, for comment. Morris had known Burchett for over 20 years, and could "never . . . reconcile the official picture of him as a communist agent with [his] own official experience of him as an idealist and convinced left-wing socialist." Morris felt that it was in "Australia's interests for the matter to be put to the test and the charges either substantiated or withdrawn."[32] Perhaps his concerns influenced the Department's Assistant Secretary, A G Hartley, who suggested that Burchett should be "issued with an Australian document of some kind . . . when he next expresses a wish to return."[33] Hartley's recommendation, along with Morris' character reference, were both ignored by Opperman.

In mid-September Opperman finally told Crosland that the Government, "after the most careful consideration", had decided against issuing Burchett with a new passport. Opperman stressed that the Government "ha[d] at all times given the fullest attention to every aspect of Mr Burchett's continued residence in other countries."[34] It was a disingenuous remark, more so because the Government had left Burchett with little choice but to reside elsewhere. It also echoed Holt's line that Burchett had "severed his connection" with Australia, and masked another attempt by more nimble minds than Opperman's to bar Burchett, permanently.

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[28] Letter from Paul Hasluck, Minister for External Affairs to S P Crosland, Federal Executive of the AJA; NAA6980/6, item 5200616, folio 15.
[29] See B M Snedden and M Bernie Schedvin's appraisal of Opperman in *Billy Mackie Snedden - An Unlikely Liberal*, pp 69-70.
[30] Letter from S P Crosland to the Minister for Immigration, Hubert Opperman, 1 June 1965; NAA1838/370, *op cit*, folio 99.
[31] Letter from S P Crosland to the Minister for Immigration, Hubert Opperman, 12 August 1965, *ibid.*, folio 101.
[32] Internal memorandum by A M Morris, Assistant Secretary, Defence Liaison Branch, Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 24 March 1965. Cited by Alex Carey, "The Bureaucratic Passport War", in Ben Kiernan (ed) *Burchett Reporting the Other Side of the World*, p 70.
[33] Memorandum from AG Hartley, Assistant Secretary, Department of External Affairs, to the Secretary, Department of Immigration, 31 March 1965, NAA *op cit*, folio 61.
[34] Letter from Hubert Opperman to S P Crosland, Undated; *ibid*, folio 109. A handwritten note - folio 102 - from the Minister's private secretary, D Simpson, to the Minister, indicates that the letter was written in mid-September.

On 13 July the Melbourne *Sun* had reported that the Government feared Burchett would be accorded a "hero['s]" welcome by Australian communists if he returned. Given Menzies' commitment of troops to South Vietnam in late April, and Burchett's staunch support for the other side, his return was obviously unwelcomed by the Government.[35] According to the *Sun*, the Government realised it could not block Burchett's entry, unless it established he was no longer an Australian citizen.[36] The article neglected to mention that in February an inter-departmental committee, consisting of representatives from Prime Minister, External Affairs, Immigration, Attorney-General and ASIO, had recommended that a sterner attitude be adopted towards Burchett.[37] In disclosing the Government's intention to bar Burchett, the *Sun* had apparently touched on the committee's agenda. Plimsoll was informed by Immigration's Secretary, Peter Heydon, that the leak had not come from his Department.[38]

That dexterous manipulator of the *Immigration Act*, Harold McGinness, was summoned to examine if barring Burchett was legally enforceable. McGinness contended that "an Australian birth [wa]s not in itself sufficient to prevent a person being an immigrant", and denied entry on that basis. On 15 July, McGinness approached a senior Legal Officer with the Attorney-General's Department, J S O'Connor, for his opinion.[39] Though O'Connor agreed in principle with McGinness, he had his doubts - given the facts and precedents established in similar matters - that a court would find in the Government's favour. O'Connor drew McGinness' attention to the 1908 High Court case of *Potter vs Minahan*. The defendant, an Australian-born Chinese woman, had apparently left Australia for China at the age of five, and returned 26 years later to find her right to re-enter challenged. The Court found in her favour, ruling that "a person whose permanent home [wa]s in Australia and who, therefore, [wa]s a member of the Australian community, [wa]s not on arriving . . . from abroad, an immigrant." O'Connor specifically referred McGinness to the judgement of Justice Issac Issacs. It held that the "ultimate fact" of who constitute[d] "an immigrant" [wa]s whether or not the person under consideration [wa]s "at that time a constituent part of the . . . Australian people." Though O'Connor thought there was "a *prima facie* case . . . for describing Burchett as an emigrant", and therefore justification for "refusing to issue him [with] an entry permit", he cautioned against such an action. Immigration would be required to establish that Burchett had no personal and professional ties to Australia, professed no "Australian ideals", and had "completely abandoned his association" with the

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[35] In early February the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, P J Lawlor, recommended that because of Burchett's support for the North Vietnamese the decision on his passport should "not be disturbed." See the memorandum from P J Lawlor, the Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, to the Secretary, Department of Immigration, 9 February 1965; NAA *ibid*, folio 59.

[36] "Government wants to bar pro-Red" the Melbourne *Sun*, 13 July 1965; *ibid*, folio 92.

[37] See memorandum from the Secretary, Department of Immigration to the Secretary, Department of External Affairs, 4 February 1965; *ibid*, folio 58.

[38] A secret memorandum from the Secretary, Department for Immigration, P R Heydon, to the Secretary, Department of External Affairs, 14 July 1965; *ibid*, folios 90-91.

[39] Secret memorandum from Acting First Assistant Secretary, Department of Immigration, H McGinness, to Senior Legal Officer, Attorney-General Department, J S O'Connor, 15 July 1965; *ibid*, folios 80-82.

country.[40] On reviewing the facts, O'Connor advised McGinness that the Government would have "considerable difficulty . . . in establishing that Burchett had abandoned his membership of the community . . . in a court of law."[41] Thus, McGinness was compelled to admit that Burchett's banishment, if contested, was not legally enforceable.[42] Neither McGinness nor his colleagues told Burchett of this. Instead, they sought other ways of keeping him out.

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On 16 December 1968, a select group of Burchett's supporters met in the Methodist Church Centre off Melbourne's Little Collins Street. They had been summoned by the peace activist, the Reverend John Lloyd, to form a committee to lobby Gorton's Liberal Government for the re-issue of Wilfred's passport. As Lloyd took the chair he noted the presence of his fellow peace parsons, Alf Dickie, Frank Hartley and Ian Westerman, Victorian State Labor parliamentarians, Doug Elliot and Ian Cathie, and their Federal Labor colleagues, Dr Jim Cairns and Gordon Bryant. Also present were the editor of Leftist quarterly, *Overland*, Stephen Murray-Smith, prominent Melbourne University academic, Myra Roper, the former Chairman of the Victorian State Rivers and Water Supply Commission and Burchett family member, Sir Ronald East, and Winston. Lloyd offered apologies on behalf of Cheshire's John Hooker, the former Labor leader, Arthur Calwell, and leading Melbourne lawyer, Frank Galbally.[43]

The Burchett Passport Committee (BPC) was Lloyd's brainchild. With its blend of Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament (CICD) members, Labor parliamentarians and supporters, and leftist-leaning intellectuals - not to forget its lone Liberal Party member, East - the Committee signified the burgeoning support for the reinstalment of Wilfred's passport. It was also indicative of the evolving ties between Labor's left and the non-communist remnants of the once politically marginalised and CPA-dominated, Victorian Peace Council (VPC), from which the CICD had stemmed in 1959.

Though tentative, those ties had strengthened with Labor's opposition to the Vietnam War. Initially, Labor policy concurred with Liberal fears of Asian dominoes toppling to communism. When the Americans commenced air strikes against North Vietnam in February 1965, Labor's federal caucus had voiced its support; and in March, when US troops stepped ashore at Da Nang, the party's leader, Arthur Calwell, had applauded their arrival. But on 10 November 1964 Menzies had introduced conscription, which resurrected for Labor spectres of the Great War's referenda. Calwell stridently opposed the measure, branding it a "lottery of death." But it and Australia's commitment to the war

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[40] Secret memorandum from the Senior Legal officer, Attorney General Department, J S O'Connor to the Secretary, Department of Immigration, 4 August 1965; *ibid*, folios 83-86.
[41] Secret memorandum from the Senior Legal officer, Attorney General Department, J S O'Connor to the Secretary, Department of Immigration, 7 September 1965; *ibid*, folios 87-88.
[42] Handwritten note from McGinness to Charles, 29 October 1965; *ibid*, folio 98.
[43] Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Burchett Passport Committee, 16 December 1969; BPC SLV & BPC Papers MU.

were supported by 70% of voters, according to opinion pollsters.[44] Calwell never adequately reconciled the apparent contradiction in Labor policy of supporting intervention in Asia whilst opposing conscription at home. Thus, after Labor was soundly trounced in the 1966 election, he was replaced by Gough Whitlam. Though opposed to the war, Whitlam realised that the party had lost ground because of it. Indeed, half of Labor's voters still supported Australia's involvement. Mindful, Whitlam was cautiously vague on Labor's position, ensuring that both opponents and supporters of the war within the party could be accommodated, and that the conflict itself would not become a political millstone.[45] But some on Labor's left were far too emphatically against the war for Whitlam's liking.

Jim Cairns had been a VPC member until his resignation in 1950. He had also attended the 1959 Melbourne Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament, from which the CICD had taken its name. Cairns had entered parliament the previous year, as the member for Yarra, defeating the 'grouper' and Burchett critic, Stan Keon. Beforehand, Cairns had studied and lectured on South East Asian affairs at Melbourne University. The dispatch of Australian advisers to South Vietnam in 1962, and the assassinations of Kennedy and Diem in November 1963, had sparked Cairns' fear that "Vietnam would extend into a world crisis", and he warned Parliament of "the error and evil of military escalation." Unlike the Liberals, who saw South Vietnam as another Asian domino for bolstering, Cairns viewed the conflict as a "social revolution", historically inevitable as Vietnam moved from colonialism to self-determination. Like Wilfred, Cairns argued that intervention, under the auspices of the American Alliance, was futile, because it ignored the course of history, the region's realities and Australia's interests.[46]

In mid-1968, Cairns accepted an invitation to attend a conference in Sydney on the war and the nature of Asian revolution in general. Organised by the CICD's Sydney affiliate, the Association for International Co-operation and Disarmament (AICD), the conference had been planned for mid-October. Apart from Cairns, organisers had approached John Gittings of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, the diplomat turned journalist and author, Gregory Clark, 'China Hand', Felix Greene, and local academics, C P Fitzgerald and Max Teichman. Wilfred had also been invited, and had accepted "in principle." In late June Wilfred had approached W Kiddle, Australia's Chief Migration Officer in London, about the likelihood of a passport or entry document to Australia. By 20 September Wilfred had not received a response and wrote to Kiddle, stating that as he had been invited to a conference in Sydney, his request was now urgent. In early October, he was finally informed that it had been refused.[47]

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[44] See John Murphy, *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's Vietnam War*, Allen & Unwin 1993, *op cit*, pp 131, 118-119 & 207

[45] See John Murphy, *ibid*, pp 207 & 208.

[46] J F Cairns, *The Eagle and the Lotus: Western Intervention in Vietnam 1847-1968*, p ix-xi.

[47] Letter from Wilfred Burchett to Greg Anderson, General Secretary, AICD, 2 September 1968; BPC Papers MU. The letter from Wilfred Burchett, Paris, to Mr G Kiddle, Chief Migration Officer, Australia House, London, 20 September 1968; NAA6980/6, item 5200616, folio 350. Letter from H J Grant, Deputy Chief Migration Officer, to Wilfred Burchett; BPC Papers MU.

The refusal coincided with the release of an Australian businessman, Keith Hyland, who had been kidnapped by the NLF while travelling through Saigon's Cholon district during the Tet Offensive in January. Hyland had been in Asia for 28 years, manufacturing and exporting stuffed duck-feathered pillows and bedding. It had earned him a fortune and the nickname, the 'Duck Feather King.' Shortly after his kidnapping, Hyland's pregnant wife, Lisa, had approached Wilfred for assistance. Through his NLF contacts in Phnom Penh, Wilfred learned that Hyland was alive, and informed Lisa.[48] Hyland finally surfaced in late November and at his Phnom Penh press conference told of Wilfred's role in securing his release.[49] The Australia press either disregarded or - at best - begrudgingly acknowledged Burchett's part. Lisa Hyland, however, wrote to both Wilfred and Vessa expressing her gratitude.[50]

John Lloyd felt that the Hyland story provided an opportunity to not only push Wilfred's case, but also a dissenting view of the war. When the story 'broke' in late November, Lloyd detected a slight but favourable shift in the press's attitude towards Wilfred. Lloyd believed that Wilfred's passport had been revoked because his "political viewpoint" was contrary to Government policy. It was an illiberal precedent, Lloyd argued, and a threat to those, like the CICD, who campaigned against the conflict.[51] It was also an opportunity to rekindle flagging interest in the war. In August, Lloyd had lamented "that there [wa]s no longer any debate about Vietnam."[52] He, and his CICD colleagues, undoubtedly considered the denial of Wilfred's rights an issue on which to discredit the Government and spark discussion about the war.

In early December, Lloyd approached Winston and an ailing George Burchett about establishing a committee to lobby the Government for the return of Wilfred's passport. While amenable to the idea, George and Winston requested that the committee should concentrate on the restitution of Wilfred's political rights, and not on humanitarian concerns surrounding George's failing health. With George and Winston's blessing, Lloyd approached Wilfred, who "heartily" consented. He, too, wanted the campaign conducted on a "political rather than a humanitarian basis." The matter was "a question of my fundamental rights as an Australian citizen" he told Lloyd, and not to be conveyed as the yearnings of a "penitent prodigal to . . . visit his aged father."[53] He sought to defend the family's name and its pioneering heritage, and to reclaim his rights as an Australian, which he considered bequeathed by birth and not political favour.

On 16 December, Winston told the inaugural meeting of the BPC about his Wilfred. Of those assembled, all were acquainted with the Burchetts, but few - including Cairns and Lloyd - had met Wilfred. All undoubtedly knew of his apparent treacheries, and so Winston spoke of Wilfred's

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[48] Letter from Lisa Hyland to Wilfred Burchett, 10 May 1968; BP SLV.
[49] See the "*Times* Diary: Burchett and the Featherman", the London *Times*, 27 November 1968.
[50] Letter from Lisa Hyland to Wilfred Burchett, 10 May 1968; and individual letters from Lisa Hyland to Wilfred and Vessa Burchett, 30 November 1968; BP SLV.
[51] Letter from John Lloyd to Wilfred Burchett, 4 December 1968, BPC Papers MU..
[52] Cited by John Murphy, *op cit*, pp 227-228.
[53] For details of the meeting see John Lloyd's letter to Wilfred, dated 4 December 1968, BPC Papers MU. The letter from John Lloyd to Wilfred Burchett, 4 December 1968, BPC Papers MU.

achievements: his shortened education and days on the Murray; his flair for languages; his service in Burma and the Pacific during the Second World War; and his political disillusionment after it. Winston's Wilfred was also a selfless campaigner for peace and civil liberties, and "more interested in political and social realities than . . . ideological philosophies and doctrinal depths."[54] Winston briefly mentioned Wilfred's writings on Korea and Vietnam, though without elaboration. Those present knew the stories and had heard the rumours of treason, for Winston was preaching to the converted.

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John Lloyd had wanted an AJA representative on the BPC and approached Syd Crosland on likely candidates. As the matter was outside Crosland's jurisdiction, it was put to the AJA's Victorian Branch and subsequently vetoed. Later, Lloyd explained to Wilfred that the Branch was "evidently very much more conservative than the national body."[55] As a consequence, Crosland's Federal Executive and Lloyd's Committee conducted separate campaigns for the return of Wilfred's passport. Indeed, shortly before the establishment of the BPC, Crosland had again approached the Immigration Minister on Wilfred's behalf.

Billy Snedden had moved into the portfolio after the 1966 election. On his own admission, Snedden tended to disregard the advice of his Secretary, Peter Heydon, relying instead on the wily McGinness. Snedden later remarked on McGinness' "total fairness, objectivity and surprising compassion within the limits of the policy", none of which was apparent in either man's treatment of Burchett.[56] In mid-September Crosland had told Snedden that "[j]ournalists should have freedom of movement in order to exercise freedom of expression." This right had been denied to Burchett, a "journalist of world-wide repute" who, in Crosland's opinion, had been "made a political exile" because of his opposition to Australia's foreign policy in Asia. As "an Australian by birth", Crosland emphasised, Burchett was entitled to a passport, whilst as a travelling journalist he should be allowed the tools of his trade.[57] But Snedden was unmoved. On 23 October he baldly advised Crossland that the "Government ha[d] decided that an Australian passport w[ould] not be granted to Mr Burchett; and he has been so informed."[58]

Snedden's decision had quite a past. It began on 2 July, at a meeting prompted by Burchett's call on Kiddle in London. Chaired by Gorton, who was taking a keen interest in the case, and attended by Snedden, the Deputy Prime Minister, John McEwan, and External Affairs Minister, Hasluck, the meeting ruled that Burchett had no right to a passport.[59] On 16 July an inter-departmental committee convened to legitimate the decision. As usual, it was impressively credentialled. The Secretary of the

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[54] Winston Burchett, "Wilfred Burchett - A Biographical Sketch", BP SLV.
[55] Letter from John Lloyd to Wilfred Burchett, 3 April 1969, BPC Papers MU.
[56] Cited in Billy Mackie Snedden & M Bernie Schedvin, *op cit*, p 72.
[57] Letter from the General Secretary, Federal Executive, AJA, Sid Crosland to the Minister of Immigration, Billy Snedden, 11 September 1968; NAA6980/6, item 5200616, folio 17.
[58] Letter from the Minister for Immigration, Billy Snedden, to the General Secretary, National Federal Executive, S P Crosland, 23 October 1968; *ibid*, folio 31.

Prime Minister's Department, Alan Griffiths, attended, as did McGinness and O L Davis, an Assistant Secretary from External Affairs. ASIO sent Colin Brown, the Organisation's Canberra Chief and a veteran of Korea; whilst the Attorney-General's Department was represented by a Senior Legal Officer, B J O'Donovan. They were to decide if there was a "need to communicate . . . the decision to Burchett", or draft "a response to anything Burchett might say", or a "supplementary statement elaborating on [his] activities abroad." O'Donovan contended that the Government had "no legal requirement" to inform Burchett of its decision, but McGinness, mindful of the political ramifications, disagreed.[60] He urged that "a decision should be communicated as soon as possible . . . in accordance with normal practice and courtesy", to avoid "grounds for criticism of the Government."[61] His argument coloured the committee's recommendations that any response should be governed by "political" considerations; and "[p]roperly recorded statements" should to be drafted, and attention given to the appropriate place and "timing" of their release.[62]

But the committee was divided on whether Burchett should be informed orally or in writing. As a result, the Prime Minister's Department sought advice from the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department, E J Hook, and the Deputy Director-General of ASIO, Peter Barbour. Both preferred word-of-mouth. Hook maintained that a written reply might "provide a firm basis for further agitations by Mr Burchett or those who . . . espoused his cause." It could also "constitute evidence in a convenient form that the issue of a passport had been refused to him", if Burchett pursued the matter in court.[63] Barbour, though agreeing, recommended a more taciturn approach. The less said to Burchett, the better. It would add to Burchett's "state of uncertainty", and the more uncertain he became, the less likely he was to darken Australia's doorstep. Like Hook, Barbour advocated that written responses should be minimised in number and substance, as Burchett "might . . . seek to use [them] as the foundation of a complaint that he had been denied something to which he [wa]s entitled."[64]

A more pressing problem, however, was the drafting of the "supplementary statements." At the July interdepartmental committee meeting, Colin Brown - backed by O'Donovan - had suggested that the statements should "point to specific activities . . . in such terms as to support the Government's position without raising problems of proof or refutation."[65] Brown considered ASIO's role was to collect and inform, not substantiate.[66] This posed obvious problems. Because ASIO's Burchett was

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[59] Details of this meeting, which took place on 2 July, appear in a secret memorandum from McGiness for the Secretary, Heydon, to the Minister, 25 September 1968; *ibid*, folios 383-384.
[60] Memorandum titled "Wilfred Burchett - Interdepartmental Meeting held on 16 July 1968 in the Prime Minister's Department"; *ibid*, folios 93-94.
[61] Confidential memorandum by Mr H McGiness entitled "Wilfred Burchett - Interdepartmental Meeting, 16 July 1968; *ibid*, folios 77-79.
[62] Confidential memorandum entitled Wilfred Burchett - Interdepartmental Meeting held on 16 July in the Prime Minister's Department"; *op cit.*
[63] Memorandum from the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department, E J Hook, to the Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, 19 July 1968; *ibid*, folio 99.
[64] Secret cable from Peter Barbour to Colin Brown and the Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, Undated; *ibid*, folio 96.
[65] *Ibid.*
[66] *Ibid*; & the author's telephone conversation with Colin Brown, 24 November 1999.

predominantly tailored to discredit the journalist, it lacked the substance to withstand rigorous scrutiny or cross-examination. Therefore, any statement based on ASIO material, if too loosely drafted, risked being defamatory.

According to McGinness, this problem had already been discussed by Gorton and the Attorney-General, Nigel Bowen. Bowen had apparently warned that the statements, if gleaned from ASIO's files, "would have to be carefully drafted . . . to ensure that there was no room for any legal action for defamation." But Bowen was also mindful that the statements had to discourage Burchett from returning. Hence, the Attorney-General urged that the statements must not "reduc[e] . . . the possibility of a treason charge, [or] . . . say that there was not sufficient evidence available to justify such a charge, thus casting doubt upon the[ir] very accuracy." To overcome this dilemma, O'Donovan suggested that it "might be advantageous to put off conveying decision [to Burchett] until . . . Parliament . . . reassemble[d]." Then, O'Donovan added, "possible defamatory aspects" would be protected by parliamentary privilege.[67] O'Donovan might have been conscious of the difficulties ASIO was experiencing in shaping suitable statements. Barbour had been given the job, and while sifting through ASIO's files told Brown that he saw "difficulties and dangers" in framing the statements. Barbour confided that although ["he] might not . . . recommend [their] use, [they] m[ight] serve to . . . promote useful discussion." But it would be unsuitable for the parliament and press, he feared, and legally indefensible.[68]

On 24 July Snedden discussed the matter with Gorton. The next day, Snedden wrote to the Prime Minister, recommending Kiddle should be advised to inform Burchett that his request had been refused. Any inquiries from the press, Snedden added, "should be answered simply that it [wa]s not the practice to discuss decisions made on applications for passports." If Burchett requested an explanation, Kiddle should be "authorised only to say that the passport w[ould] not be issued."[69]

Though accepted, Snedden's recommendations were not immediately acted upon, as Barbour's statements were still being shaped. On 13 August, Parliament was due to resume and, in the week before, the interdepartmental committee reconvened to consider Barbour's work. His first statement bluntly declared that "Burchett's activities abroad over a long period of time ha[d] been prejudicial to Australia's national interests." The statement did not elaborate on the nature of those "activities", but suggested that they were of sufficient seriousness to justify the denial of his passport. O'Donovan cautioned the committee that the statement was defamatory.[70] His fellow-committeemen, however,

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[67] Confidential memorandum by Mr H McGinness, 16 July 1968; *op cit.*
[68] Secret memorandum from Peter Barbour to Colin Brown, *op cit.*
[69] Memorandum from the Immigration Minister, Billy Snedden, to the Prime Minister, John Gorton, 25 July 1968, *ibid*, folio 114.
[70] Top secret document entitled "W G Burchett - Attachment A", *ibid*, folio 158. The Attorney-General's comment was attached to the bottom of the document.

considered it "suitable" for responding to "press inquiries", but preferred its use be confined to Parliament.[71]

The second statement was longer and more damning, and certainly defamatory. It detailed all the usual allegations from Korea: Burchett's work as "a propagandist for the communist side"; his role in "actively promot[ing]" the lie that UN forces had "engaged in bacteriological warfare"; and his attempt to sway Australian prisoners-of-war from "the cause for which [they] . . . were fighting." The statement also suggested that Burchett had "achieved some standing with the Government of North Vietnam and the leaders of the NLF"; and that his work "constitute[d] propaganda for the cause against which Australian troops [were] fighting."[72] The committee agreed that this statement should be restricted to Parliament, and only be used if the Government was "under pressure . . . to be more specific" about its decision. Indeed, O'Donovan urged that both statements should be used sparingly and prudently. "[I]f either . . . were made on behalf of the Commonwealth outside the Parliament, the publication [of them] would provide Burchett with a cause of action for defamation", he warned.[73]

In its report, the committee acknowledged that "it was virtually impossible to draft any statement of reasons" for denying Burchett a passport, "which was not defamatory." It recommended that the statements were only for parliamentary use, and "nothing" from them "should be volunteered to the press." Journalists, on inquiring, were to be dismissively advised: "It [wa]s not the practice to discuss decisions made on applications for passports." The report was also mindful that the statements, if improperly used, could result in an embarrassing defamation action. Burchett would then be in a position to "pressure . . . the Government [in]to provid[ing] him with a travel document . . . for the purpose of pursuing his claim against the Government." He might also "use the court as a forum for propaganda", and, if his action succeeded, "it would be gravely prejudicial to the Commonwealth's interest."[74] Ironically, the committee in seeking to bar the real Burchett, had established that the Government's 'traitorous Burchett' was a myth. Nonetheless, the 'traitor' had to be kept alive, not only to deter the real one from returning, but also to mask the roles of Menzies and Holt, their numerous Liberal colleagues, and the faceless public servants who knowingly fed the myth. The lie had to be maintained cover-up Menzies and Holt's deceit.

On 26 August Kiddle was advised of the committee's recommendations by an Assistant Secretary with Immigration's Entry and Citizenship Division, Ted Charles. Charles apologised for not responding earlier, but an unforseen problem had emerged. Canberra had intended to advise Kiddle

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[71] Top secret memorandum entitled "Report of Interdepartmental Committee Meeting held on 7 August 1968 at the Prime Minister's Department", *ibid*, folios 159-160.
[72] Top secret memorandum entitled "W G Burchett - Attachment B - Statement approved by the Attorney-General for use only in answers to questions in Parliament", *ibid*, folios 156-157.
[73] Top secret memorandum entitled "Report of Interdepartmental Committee Meeting held on 7 August 1968 at the Prime Minister's Department", *op cit*.
[74] *Ibid*.

once the matter had been raised in Parliament and commented on in the press.[75] But neither had occurred, providing "no opportunity to make public the decision nor any necessity for [it] to be conveyed orally to Burchett." Charles instructed Kiddle not to tell Burchett his request had been denied until it was "known in Australia." If Burchett inquired, Kiddle should respond that he was "seeking further information from Canberra."[76] Burchett was to be advised on the Government's terms, to ensure that the so-called reasons for the decision could be safely aired under the protection of parliamentary privilege.

By late September, Burchett had informed Kiddle of his invitation to the AICD Conference in Sydney. It spurred Kiddle to hurriedly cable Canberra for urgent advice.[77] As a consequence, Snedden, who was still mulling over his response to Crosland's mid-September letter, reconvened the interdepartmental committee on 24 September.[78] On the committee's agenda were the usual items, notably the timing of the announcement and the means of informing Burchett. But, on the prompting of ASIO's Colin Brown, the discussion moved onto Burchett's right to re-enter Australia. Brown staunchly opposed it. As a Korean War veteran, he considered Burchett and Winnington, and affiliates and off-shoots of the APC, traitors. In 1952, Brown had travelled to Hong Kong, *en route* to the Korean War, on a flight containing APC delegates bound for the WPC-sponsored Peking Peace Conference. As he later remembered, he wanted to "bop" them.[79] The flight, and his experiences in Korea, had understandably tainted his attitude towards Burchett and *peaceniks*, alike. Thus, Brown warned the committee that the AICD was "a communist influenced peace organisation[,] . . . recognised by the [WPC]" and part of the Soviet Union's "international front."[80] He emphasised that "arguments against facilitating Burchett's return [were] all the stronger in view of the nature of the Conference which he now wish[ed] to attend" McGinness, mindful of the legal problems in barring Burchett, diverted the discussion onto more achievable items, most notably the preparation of a Cabinet submission.[81]

On 2 October, the submission was approved by Snedden and forwarded to the Prime Minister's Department. The submission disclosed that as the opportunity had not occurred to air the decision in parliament, neither Burchett nor the AJA had been informed. It recommended that both should be advised of the refusal "without comment as to the reasons"; and, furthermore, that "any

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[75] Confidential Cabinet minute, entitled "Rejection of an application by Wilfred Burchett for an Australian passport, Decision 417, Copy 32, 13 August 1968; *ibid*, folio 179,

[76] Secret Memorandum from E L Charles, Department of Immigration, Canberra, to G Kiddle, Chief Migration Officer, London, 26 August 1968; *ibid*, folios 180-181

[77] See the "secret" cablegram from Kiddle, Australian High Commission, London, to the Department of Immigration, Canberra, 23 September 1968; *ibid*, folios 343-344.

[78] Secret memorandum from P R Heydon, the Secretary, Department of Immigration, to the Minister, 25 September, 1968, *ibid*, folio 384; and memorandum entitled "Interdepartmental meeting on W G Burchett held at the Department of Immigration at 2.30 pm on 24 September 1968; *ibid*, folios 345-347.

[79] Conversation with Colin Brown, 24 November 1999.

[80] Secret cable which ASIO's Brown handed to McGiness on 24 September 1968; NAA 6890/6 *ibid*, folio 382.

[81] Secret draft submission to Cabinet entitled "W G Burchett", undated; *ibid*, folios 396-399.

request for comment outside Parliament [should] be answered to the effect . . . it is not the practice to discuss reasons for decisions of this nature."[82]

The submission, however, neglected to note Burchett's recently acquired Cuban passport. After some consideration, it had been omitted. Burchett's Cuban connection had been drawn to Snedden's attention while the submission was under discussion. In August 1967, Wilfred and Vessa had visited Cuba. During a meeting with the Cuban President, Fidel Castro, Wilfred was asked about his travel problems. Subsequently, he and Vessa were offered Cuban passports. Though grateful, Wilfred declined, telling Castro that he "was still fighting for [his] legitimate rights to [his] Australian passport."[83] However, prior to the Paris Peace Talks, Wilfred changed his mind and accepted the offer, after receiving reassurances that no change of nationality was necessary. It was a matter of convenience, not a surrender of his birthright. With a Cuban passport, Wilfred did not require entry visas for either France or Britain.

On 5 April 1968, Wilfred flew into Vientiane from Hanoi. He filled out the necessary Lao immigration forms, and then promptly departed for Phnom Penh. In mid-July the forms were sent to G J Terry, a junior consular official at the Australian Embassy in Vientiane. Terry noticed that Burchett had scribbled he was of "Cuban nationality", instead of Australian.[84] The document was forwarded to Canberra, where handwriting experts from the Federal Police mulled over Burchett's scrawl, concluding that it "probably" was his handiwork.[85] Fleetingly, McGinness and his fellow-committeemen considered it worthy of Cabinet's consideration. Though they noted there was no evidence to suggest that Burchett had obtained Cuban citizenship, and thus "ceased to be an Australian", they saw "no objection to, and probably advantage in, a reference to the admission . . . that he regarded himself as a Cuban citizen."[86] Though it was not included in the final Cabinet submission, the prospect of using it at a later date played on McGinness' mind.

On 8 October, the submission went before Cabinet and was approved. The following day, Kiddle was instructed to advise Burchett of the decision.[87] Crosland was not informed until 23 October. McGinness had deliberately forestalled advising Crosland, to ensure it arrived while Parliament was session. As McGinness explained to Snedden and Heydon, this would provide the "opportunity to state Burchett's activities . . . if necessary."[88] Without any compunction, the Gorton

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[82] Submission for Cabinet by the Minister for Immigration, B M Snedden, entitled "W G Burchett - Passport & Re-entry to Australia"; *ibid*, folios 400-402.
[83] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 31 August 1967, BP SLV. See also *At the Barricades*, pp 245-246 and *Passport*, pp 292 and 293.
[84] Secret memorandum entitled "Documents concerning Wilfred Burchett", Statement by E J Terry, Consular Officer at the Australian Emabssy, Vientiane, 24 July 1968; NAA 6890/6 *ibid;* folio 126.
[85] Memorandum from B J Fitzgerald, Documentation Examination Bureau to the Commissioner, Kinsgton, ACT, 7 August 1968; *ibid*, folio 177.
[86] Secret draft submission to Cabinet entitled "W G Burchett", undated; *ibid*, folios 396-399.
[87] See Cabinet decision 576 of the 8 October 1968 authorised by the Secretary to Cabinet, E J Bunting, *ibid*, folio 9; and the cable from Immigration to Kiddle, 9 October 1968; *ibid*, folio 11.
[88] Confidential memorandum from H McGinness for the Secretary to the Minister, 10 October 1968; *ibid*, folio 21.

Government was prepared to knowingly make claims against Burchett, which it knew were defamatory, if stated outside the Parliament.

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On 12 November, Crosland again wrote to Snedden on Wilfred's behalf. On this occasion his tone was terser, born from frustration at the Government's repeated refusals to offer reasons for the denial of Wilfred's passport. As Crosland explained, the AJA's Federal Executive could only "assume that Mr Burchett [wa]s being penalised for his political beliefs." To redress the situation, Crosland told Snedden that the Executive had referred Burchett's case to the UN Secretary-General, U Thant.[89]

Rather embarrassingly for the Gorton Government, 1968 was International Human Rights Year, a fact accentuated in the Executive's press release, which accompanied Crosland's letter to Snedden. The release reiterated that Burchett was being "victimised and made a political exile", because his views were not to the liking of the Gorton Government. It had shown "contempt" for the UN's *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, in denying Burchett his "right to travel" and "be with his family in his native country"; as well as "the right[s] of association, . . . citizenship [and] . . . free speech."[90] On 21 November Snedden dismissively responded that the Federal Executive's views had been "noted."[91]

Crosland's letter had come at a prickly moment for Snedden and the Government. Both were undoubtedly mindful that Burchett's behind-the-scenes' activities in Paris had earned him respect from Harriman's delegation. Indeed, the Australian Embassy in Paris had noted to Canberra that Burchett was on "fairly good terms with some members of the . . . delegation." Whilst Snedden was contemplating his reply to Crosland, one of the delegation, Robert Kaplan, informed Australian diplomats in Paris that Burchett had approached the Americans about the prospect of securing a visa to visit the US in early December. Burchett apparently wanted to cover the debate on China's admission to the UN for the left-wing French newspaper, *L'Evenement*. Kaplan asked the Embassy for the Australian Government's "views", as requests by correspondents, specifically to cover UN proceedings, were "ordinarily" granted.[92]

Most American diplomats, however, did not consider Burchett, an ordinary journalist. His writings were too discordant, and far too critical of US policy in Asia. Furthermore, his lengthy association with the New York *Guardian* had rooted him on the radical side of political fence, along with the likes of 'the Chicago Seven' and the Weathermen, also frequenters of the paper's pages.

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[89] Letter from the Secretary, Federal Executive of the AJA, S P Crosland, to the Minister for Immigration, B M Snedden, 12 November 1968; *ibid*, folio 47.
[90] Press statement issued by the General Secretary of the AJA's Federal Executive, S P Crosland, 12 November; *ibid*, folios 43-44.
[91] Letter from the Minister for Immigration, B M Snedden, to the General Secretary of the AJA's Federal Executive, S P Crosland, 21 November 1968; *ibid*, folio 197.
[92] Secret cablegram from the Australian Embassy, Paris, to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 18 November 1968; *ibid*, folio 56.

Hence, securing a US visa was not as procedural as Kaplan made out. Indeed, the Deputy Director of Public Affairs with the US Mission at the UN, Stuart, told his Australian counterparts in New York that Burchett's application had only been "given a lukewarm endorsement" by the Americans in Paris. Stuart also revealed that though the application had satisfied UN authorities, he had recommended to his Ambassador that it be rejected, despite the "difficulties" it would cause.[93]

The *Washington Post's* Peter Estabrook had heard Burchett's application was under consideration. He asked the Australian mission at the UN whether Burchett was "wanted in Australia for an extraditable offence"; and, if so, would the Australian Government be seeking his extradition from US authorities. The mission dismissively replied that this was "a hypothetical case, . . . something on which [it] could express no opinion", and passed Estabrook's query onto Canberra.[94] On 23 November External Affairs instructed Australian diplomats in New York and Washington that it was not "appropriate to comment" on Estabrook's inquiry, because it could "foreshadow any action which might or might not be taken."

But the Government had no intention of seeking Burchett's extradition. When Cumes, an Assistant Secretary with External Affairs, was presented with Estabrook's poser, he noted that "clearly there were opportunities recently . . . had we so desired and no action was taken."[95] Cumes was undoubtedly aware that the Government's position was little more than tacit bluff. Presumably, he also knew that the Department had instructed the Australian Ambassador in Paris, Anderson, to exercise "caution" when dealing with Burchett, and "say nothing . . . on matters of substance." Transcripts were to be made of conversations with the journalist, and another officer was always to be within earshot. Requests for a passport were to be hastily cabled to Canberra "for consideration before any reaction [was] given to Burchett."[96]

On the evening of 27 November Wilfred arrived in Montreal. Canadian authorities had reassured the Australian High Commission in Ottawa that Burchett's activities would be kept "under surveillance."[97] Meanwhile, Burchett was due in the US on 3 December. The Australian Embassy in Washington had heard that he was to address an anti-war rally at Filmore on 5 December. Other speakers included "the old man of the New Left", Herbert Marcuse, the Black Panther leader, H Rap Brown, and the folk singer, Pete Seeger.[98] The Embassy was hopeful American authorities would view

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[93] Confidential cablegram from the Australian Mission to the United Nations, New York, to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 21 November 1968; *ibid*, folios 59-60.
[94] Confidential cablegram from the Australian Mission to the United Nations, New York, to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 20 November 1968; *ibid*, folios 58-59.
[95] Department of Immigration minute from G A Cole to the First Assistant Secretary, Immigration, 22 November 1968; *ibid*, folio 61.
[96] Confidential cablegram, from the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, to the Australian Mission to the UN, New York; the Australian Embassy, Washington; and the Australian Consulate-General, New York, 23 November, 1968; *ibid*, folios198-199.
[97] Confidential cablegram from the Australian High Commissioner, Ottawa, to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 28 November 1968; *ibid*, folio 207.
[98] Cablegram from the Australian Embassy in Washington to 'Scorpion', Melbourne, 3 December 1968; *ibid*, folios 219-220.

Burchett's appearance, in such dubious company, as a breach of his UN accreditation, and so deny him a visa.[99] The Embassy also noted, with alarm, that Burchett was receiving favourable press. The *Washington Post* had reported that he was visiting on Harriman's blessing, and might even brief Richard Nixon's administration-in-waiting on the situation in Vietnam. Furthermore, the Embassy was disturbed to learn that the London *Times* had "permit[ted]" Burchett to claim responsibility for Hyland's release.[100] The Hyland story had brought Wilfred's case to prominence, but his work on Vietnam had won him the right to broaden his orbit and, perhaps, even clear his name. The 'traitorous Burchett' was no longer the only Burchett appearing in the pages of so-called respectable dailies.

Burchett was permitted to cross the border from Canada and travel to New York. On 5 December, a concerned Australian mission at the UN advised External Affairs of his access to UN hierarchy and influence amongst the press corps. Stuart had confided to the mission that Burchett "avoided bloc correspondents", mingling instead with "Westerners . . . some of whom . . . offered to arrange interviews for [him]."[101] The Australians were also told that he had briefed the Indian Ambassador, Parthasarati, on the Peace Talks. When Australian diplomats approached Parthasarati for information, he offered to introduce them to Burchett. The Australians responded that while they were "interested in what [Burchett] was doing, [they] had no special matters to take up with him."[102]

Of even greater concern was Burchett's association with U Thant. Australian diplomats had heard disturbing whispers that the Secretary-General "thought Burchett could be used as an intermediary between himself[,] and the North Vietnamese and the NLF." U Thant, however, reassured the Australians that no such role was envisaged for Burchett. The Australians, in turn, told the Secretary-General that their Government's "objection to Burchett lay not . . . in his political views as in his practical activities" during the Korean War.[103] The comment inferred that Burchett's "activities" were treasonable and, as a consequence, excused the Gorton Government's denial of his rights.

But it did not absolve the Government from its obligations under the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. On 27 November, U Thant had inquired if the mission would be responding, in part or full, to the AJA's complaint.[104] U Thant's query was quickly cabled to Canberra. The Government was aware that the responsible UN body, the Commission on Human Rights - under Resolution 228 (f) of the Economic and Social Council - did not have the powers to compel governments to answer complaints or punish transgressors. As McGinness explained to Snedden, complaints to the

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[99] Confidential cablegram from the Australian Embassy, Washington, to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 26 November 1968; *ibid*, folio 200.
[100] Cablegram from the Australian Embassy, Washington, to 'Scorpio', Melbourne; *op cit*.
[101] Confidential cablegram from the Australian Mission to the UN to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 5 December 1968; *ibid*, folios 230-231.
[102] Confidential cablegram from the Australian Mission to the United Nations to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 11 December 1968, folios 232-233.
[103] *Ibid*.
[104] Restricted cablegram from the Australian Mission to the United Nations to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 27 November 1968, *ibid*, folios 201-203.

Commission were only addressed, "if the government concerned wishe[d] to do so." But McGinness cautioned that External Affairs usually did respond, "wherever possible." The complaints were then noted and "filed away" by the Commission, without further action. Immigration's acting Secretary, R E Armstrong, was acquainted with the officer responsible for handling such complaints in External Affairs. Armstrong confided to Snedden that the officer "ha[d] neither seen nor heard of any further follow-up action on any case, and there ha[d] been many concerning Australians."[105] A draft response had already been prepared on 25 November, which maintained that the Government's position on Burchett was "in accordance with Australian law and d[id] not represent a denial of human rights."[106] The response deftly sidestepped the question of whether the law, as employed in Burchett's case, contravened the *Declaration*. The Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, Lennox Hewitt, obviously suspected it did, as he asked Immigration about the repercussions in not submitting a response to a complaint.[107]

Labor, not surprisingly, pressed the Government to justify its position on Burchett, but without success. The sharp-tongued Clyde Cameron, in a letter to Snedden, asked "the official reason" for denying Burchett his rights, and was bluntly informed it was not Government practice to comment on requests for passports.[108] Labor Senator, Justin O'Byrne, prodded by Burchett's efforts in securing Hyland's release, urged the Prime Minister to "exercise clemency", so that the journalist could visit his ailing father. O'Byrne's request momentarily ruffled the usually measured McGinness. As he explained to Heydon, Burchett had not sought "entry . . . for the specific purpose of seeing his father", despite its passing mentions in his public statements. McGinness recommended to Heydon that the humanitarian and political aspects of the case did not deserve individual attention and, as a result, the Cabinet decision of 8 October should remain in force.[109]

In mid-December, McGinness was asked - in person - by the BPC member and Labor MHR, Gordon Bryant, if Burchett was still considered an Australian citizen, and entitled to enter and exit Australia without an Australian passport. Not to be cornered, McGinness emphasised that he was not permitted to divulge details of individual cases. Nevertheless, he was prepared to offer advice on the law as "normally" applied, though he cautioned Bryant against drawing inferences to the Burchett "case." Bryant was then told that an Australian citizen could not be stripped of his citizenship unless naturalised by "fraud." But entry was another matter. McGinness warned that an Australian citizen could be refused entry from abroad, if considered by the Minister to "have abandoned Australia as his

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[105] Departmental memorandum from Acting Secretary, R E Armstrong, to the Minister for Immigration, B M Snedden, 28 November 1968; *ibid*, folios 204-205.
[106] "Draft paragraph for reply to note from the Secretariat of the United Nations to Australian Mission to the UN dated 25 November 1968; *ibid*, folio 224.
[107] Secret memorandum from C L Hewitt, the Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, to H V Casey, the Secretary, Department of Immigration, 16 December 1968; *ibid*, folio 234.
[108] Letter from Clyde Cameron, Labor MHR Hindmarsh, to the Minister for Immigration, B M Snedden, 28 November 1968; *ibid*, folio 246. See Clyde Cameron's letter to B M Snedden of 18 December 1968; *ibid*, folio 250. Snedden's response is attached to bottom of the letter.
[109] For an extract of the O'Byrne speech see the secret minute from McGinness to Heydon, 16 December 1968; *ibid*, folios 251-253.

home", thereby rendering him "an immigrant." Securely hidden under the pretext that it touched on a particular case, McGinness neglected to inform Bryant of the aforementioned legal advice he had received from the Attorney-General Department's J S O'Connor in July 1965. However, under the pretence of advising Bryant on the law as "normally" applied, McGinness proffered an opinion that he knew was legally questionable given Burchett's circumstances. Aware that the Government could not bar Burchett as "an immigrant", McGinness disingenuously slanted his advice to deter the journalist from entering.[110]

McGinness was doubtlessly mindful that the Gorton Government's obduracy was becoming politically untenable, as Labor's clamour for Burchett's rights intensified. Labor's criticism of the Government was exacerbated by Snedden's extraordinary decision to admit Oswald Mosely. A contemporary of Hitler and leader of the British fascist Black Shirts, Mosely spent the War in detention and subsequent years trying to resurrect his reputation. In 1968, he published his memoir, and approached the Australian Government for a visa to promote it. While keeping Burchett out, Snedden allowed Mosely in, to the understandable outrage of the Jewish Labor senator, Sam Cohen. He branded Mosely an "unrepentant fascist [and] . . . anti-Semitic demagogue", and asked about the Government's double standards in admitting him, a Briton, while barring Burchett, an Australian. Cohen's memory seemed longer than Snedden's. Indeed, the Minister appeared remarkably ignorant of Mosely and fascism in general. Snedden confessed to the press that his knowledge of Mosely's life was based on "schoolboy recollections." He was now a spent force and "a British subject", Snedden added, while Burchett - nearing 60 - was "younger, more active" and troublesome. Thus, the Minister sweepingly declared, Mosely could not be "compar[ed] with a man who would stir up trouble [and] . . . racial hatred."[111]

On hearing of Mosely's visa, Wilfred noted to George that he preferred rejection to acceptance in such tainted company.[112] It reinforced to Wilfred the tarnished line of Liberal history, from Menzies' appeasement of Hitler to Snedden's support for Mosely.

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In late 1968 the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department, E J Hook, advised Immigration that Burchett, on arrival at an Australian port or airport, could not be denied entry or deported, as he was an Australian citizen. Snedden was already well aware of this. Indeed, in his October submission to Cabinet, he had recommended that Burchett should not be informed "that permission for him to re-enter . . . [wa]s withheld." Snedden contended if Burchett "could by some means reach Australia", the Government would have to allow his entry, placing it in a humiliating

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[110] Secret memorandum by the First Assistant Secretary, Harold McGinness, 18 December 1968, *ibid*, folio 262-264.
[111] "Mosly's a spent force, says Snedden", the Melbourne *Herald*, 24 December 1968, and "Labor attacks Mosley visit", the Melbourne *Age*, 24 December 1968.
[112] Letter from Wilfred to George Burchett, 1 January 1969; BP SLV.

predicament. Thus, the Government mulled over other "means" of limiting Burchett's scope to return.[113]

In early January 1969 reports began filtering into the Australian press that Burchett could re-enter Australia unencumbered. It is unclear whether the Government orchestrated the reports, but they undoubtedly suited its duplicitous game. The reports, from Canberra 'insiders', admitted that Burchett, on arrival at an Australian port, could not be denied entry. The onus, now, was on Burchett to return, dispelling the impression that his rights had been infringed by Government unreasonableness, whilst bolstering the counter-view that his continued absence indicated he was hiding some unstated treason. But the reports did not tell of Government manoeuvres to prolong Burchett's absence.

The *Australian's* David Solomon was one of the journalists responsible. He suggested that Burchett would "find it as easy to get out . . . as it was to get in[,] . . . unless court proceedings [were] being taken against [him]." Solomon admitted that Burchett might encounter the occasional snag. Shipping and airline companies might have reservations about carrying him into Australia, but there was "a sufficient range" of available operators to cater for Burchett's needs.[114] The onus was on Burchett to return, not on the Government to ease his passage.

The Canberra veteran, Alan Reid, touted a similar line, though more imaginatively. Reid wrote for the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* and *Bulletin*, and was closely linked to Ern Redford, a senior officer with ASIO's Special Services Branch.[115] On 11 January 1969, Reid's "A Dual Standard for Wilfred Burchett" appeared in the *Bulletin*. The article not only contained the stock traitorous innuendos about Burchett's activities in Korea and Vietnam, but also emphasised that he did not require an Australian passport to return. Drawing on so-called Government sources, Reid alleged that Burchett was made aware of this in March 1967, while covering Holt's visit to Cambodia. Reid suggested Burchett had "made it quite clear to members of Holt's entourage" that he feared prosecution if he returned to Australia, and viewed a passport as "tantamount to a guarantee" against it. As Reid suggested, "the Government could hardly issue [Burchett] with a passport . . . and then launch proceedings against him." It was the fear of prosecution that kept Burchett away, Reid argued, and not Government policy.[116]

Wilfred was incensed by the article, and believed he was being victimised by a Government-sanctioned campaign of disinformation. He told John Lloyd that the article was "a case of mischievousness distinction and vindictiveness", and recounted his side of the story. He had apparently requested a meeting with Holt to discuss his passport. The request had been conveyed through Holt's aide, Richard Woolcott, but was refused because of the Prime Minister's heavy schedule.

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[113] See the Cabinet submission by the Minister for Immigration, B M Snedden, entitled "W G Burchett Passport to Australia"; NAA6980/6 *op cit*, folios 400-402.
[114] David Solomon, "Burchett can come and go without a passport", the *Australian*, 3 January 1968.
[115] David McKnight, *Australia's Spies and their Secrets*, pp 288-289.
[116] Alan Reid, "A Dual Standard for Wilfred Burchett", *Bulletin*, 11 January 1968.

Woolcott subsequently advised that Holt was prepared to accept a letter from Wilfred, which he promptly penned. It told of his professional achievements, his opposition to Australia's interventionist policies in Asia, and his "rights as a third generation Australian" to a passport. However, it did not contain a request for immunity from prosecution.[117] Woolcott had apparently suggested the possibility in conversation with Wilfred, who countered that he merely wanted the restoration of his "normal constitutional rights." If the Government considered it had a case against him, he added, "that [wa]s their affair."[118] As he explained to Lloyd, he was never accorded the courtesy of a response from Holt, and now finds "a distorted version of the contents" leaked to the Australian press.[119] Wilfred refuted Reid's assertions in a letter to the *Bulletin*, published on 15 February.[120] Nonetheless, Reid's piece had seemingly served its purpose, placing the onus, once again, on Burchett to return, if he had nothing to hide.

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By early January 1969 a draft response to the UN's Human Rights Commission was circulating amongst government departments for comment. There was still disagreement over the appropriate course of action. ASIO and External Affairs considered a reply necessary, but O'Donovan, from the Attorney-General's Department, felt that as the matter was not a "question of law", the Government was not obliged to respond. The Prime Minister's Department preferred to sit on the fence. It wanted "clarification on certain legal points", and preferred not to comment until "all other attitudes [were] known."[121]

On 11 February the interdepartmental committee reconvened. On its agenda was the tenor of the response - if any - and the question of whether the Government should publicly acknowledge that Burchett could freely enter Australia. The items were intertwined. By acknowledging the latter, the Government could maintain in the former that it had not exiled Burchett, as the AJA had contended, but simply refused him a passport for justifiable reasons. Most on the committee agreed that though not mandatory, a response of some sort was required. O'Donovan, however, warned of the practical difficulties in framing an adequate one. He suggested the "wording of the Human Rights Charter" posed problems in supporting "any assertion that the denial of a passport to Burchett was not denying him rights as spelt out in the Charter." Any response, O'Donovan cautioned, "certainly would have to answer the complaint point by point - and in doing this we might arrive at the conclusion that it would be better not to reply at all."[122]

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[117] Letter from Wilfred Burchett to Harold Holt, Phnom Penh, 31 March 1967, BPC Papers MU.
[118] For Wilfred's account of his meeting with Woolcott see his letter to John Lloyd, 28 January 1969, *ibid.*
[119] *Ibid.*
[120] Letter from Wilfred Burchett to the Editor, the *Bulletin*, 15 February 1969.
[121] Department of Immigration minutes from G A Cole to the Assistant Secretary, 16 January & 4 February 1969, NAA 6890/6 *op cit*, folios 289 and 311 respectively.
[122] G A Cole's memorandum entitled "Notes on meeting concerning human rights complaint about Wilfred Burchett", *ibid*, folios 312-313.

O'Donovan's reservations were ignored, and the committee drafted a bald statement, refuting the AJA's contention that the Government had denied Burchett his rights, whilst defending the Immigration Minister's right to "exercise discretion in the issue of passports."[123] Not all on the committee were comfortable with the statement. The External Affairs' representatives, Doig and Malcolm Booker, thought it failed to address the point of the AJA's complaint, that the denial of Burchett's passport had rendered him an exile. They urged that the statement should acknowledge that Burchett was free to return to Australia whenever he wished.[124] Alan Griffiths of the Prime Minister's Department agreed, but others felt that such an admission "could be interpreted as a reversal of the present Government attitude."[125] The response was left unamended. It would fulfil Australia's bureaucratic obligations to the UN's Human Rights Commission, while failing to answer the AJA's complaint. The committee had served its purpose.

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Throughout January 1969, the BPC plotted its public campaign. A petition had been prepared for presentation to Parliament, public meetings organised and a statement drafted for the press, declaring that the Government's treatment of Burchett constituted "an abuse of the Declaration of Human Rights." A press conference was called to release the statement, but it proved a "failure." Nevertheless, the Committee was garnering support from leftist Australian writers and intellectuals. Macmahon Ball had signed the petition, as had Alan Marshall, Katharine Susanah Prichard and David Martin. They were the converted, however. To alter the Government's position, the BPC needed to sway a predominantly conservative electorate, fed on myths of Burchett's treachery. Hence, Myra Roper offered the *Women's Weekly* an article on the Burchetts' home-life in Phnom Penh, whilst interviews were arranged with the ABC's *This Day Tonight*, print journalists, and talk-back radio hosts.

Wilfred was delighted with the BPC's efforts. He told Lloyd that he "was impressed by the high level of talent that had taken up his case", and felt that they too had to be convinced of his innocence. He implored Lloyd to ask even the most embarrassing questions, as he had nothing to fear from "the truth or jingoists." Wilfred also rummaged through his memories, for incidents that might have caused offence, or for figures who could substantiate his side of the story.

One of those contacted was Joseph Needham, who was still at Cambridge University. Wilfred asked Needham if he or any other members of the International Scientific Commission had since "expressed doubts" on the use of germ warfare in Korea. Needham confirmed that neither his views, nor those of his fellow commissioners, had changed.[126] Major-General William Dean was also contacted. In March, Roper, through the US Democrat senator and vehement anti-war campaigner, J

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[123] "Human Rights Communication Draft Reply", *ibid*, folio 314.
[124] See "note for file" by H V Casey, Department of Immigration, 13 February 1969, *ibid*, folio 319.
[125] Memorandum entitled "Notes on meeting concerning human rights complaint about Wilfred Burchett", *op cit*.
[126] Letter from Wilfred Burchett to Professor Needham, Paris, 19 February 1968; & Needham's response to Burchett, dated 23 February 1969: folder 130, Needham Papers IWM

William Fulbright, located Dean.[127] She told him that newspaper reports commonly touted Burchett had brain-washed Australian prisoners-of-war in Korea, and shouted obscenities and jeered at others. She asked if Dean knew of Burchett's involvement in such incidents. Dean, in response, noted his "gratitude" to Burchett "for the improvement of [his] treatment", but was unable to "refute" the claims, as he had not been housed with other prisoners.[128]

Another figure from Burchett's past was Keith Gwyther. As an Australian prisoner-of-war on the Yalu River, Gwyther had met Burchett in May 1952.[129] Gwyther's story would shake Sir Ronald East's belief in the Liberal Party's right to rule. East was a Liberal Party member, former senior public servant in the Victorian Government, and an occasional adviser to the Victorian Premier, Sir Henry Bolte. He was also a proud Burchett, who had once thought Wilfred the "black sheep" of an otherwise fine family.[130] East was concerned that the civil libertarian aspects of the Burchett case were damaging the reputations of the party and Gorton Government. On 2 February East wrote to Gorton, stating that Burchett had been the "victim of repeated stupidities" by past Liberal administrations. Gorton failed to respond. East's letter had been passed on to the dutiful McGinness: an orchestrator of the Government's non-disclosure policy.[131] East then wrote to Snedden, stating that Burchett, in the absence of formal charges, was being subjected to a "trial by slander", and called for an "independent judicial inquiry" to investigate the allegations.[132] Once again, East did not receive an answer, and so sought support from the most improbable of allies.

East had served in the Australian Flying Corps during the First World War and was prominent in RSL circles. The latter had been a strident critic of Burchett. On 9 February, its NSW State Council had passed a motion in favour of granting him a passport, so as he could re-enter and be tried for treason. East, however, asked the RSL's Federal President, Sir Arthur Lee, to suspend judgement on Burchett's guilt until the matter was completely investigated. Rather than a trial, East suggested that Lee's Federal Executive should lobby the Government to establish an independent judicial inquiry. On 21 March, Lee advised East that the Executive would support Burchett's return, providing the allegations against him were investigated.[133]

The RSL's major grievance against Burchett concerned his alleged attempts to brain-wash Australian prisoners-of-war in Korea. While Wilfred was sifting through his memories he mentioned

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[127] Letter from Myra Roper, BPC, to Senator J William Fulbright, March 1969; BPC Papers MU.
[128] Letter from Major-General William F Dean to Myra Roper, 21 April 1969; BPC Papers MU.
[129] See "The Traitor."
[130] See the letter from Sir Ronald East to the Editor of the Melbourne *Age*, Graham Perkin, 13 Febraury 1969; BP SLV.
[131] See the memorandum from C L Hewitt, the Secretary, Prime Minister's Department to the Harold McGinness, c/- Secretary, Department of Immigration, 5 February 1969, NAA6890/6,*op cit*, folio 300.
[132] Letter from Sir Ronald East to Hon. J G Gorton, Prime Minister, Parliament House, Canberra, 2 February 1969, *ibid*, folios 298-299.
[133] "Lee Denies RSL is out to get Burchett on Return", the *Australian*, 14 February 1969; & "RSL Rejects 'Try Burchett' Move", the Melbourne *Age*, 14 February 1969. Letter from Sir Arthur Lee to Sir Ronald East, 21 March 1969; BP SLV.

to Winston his dealings with Gwyther on behalf of Jack Waters.[134] Roper, subsequently, contacted Waters who advised that Gwyther was a dairy farmer outside Leongatha. On 29 January Lloyd wrote to Gwyther, requesting a meeting.[135] Gwyther agreed, and on 9 February Lloyd, Roper, East and Winston Burchett journeyed to Leongatha. According to Lloyd, Gwyther, on hearing Wilfred's account of their meeting in Korea, confirmed that it was "substantially true." But Lloyd cautioned Wilfred that whether Gwyther would repeat his story once "the establishment worked on him" was another matter.[136] Winston also told Wilfred that Gwyther had made "clear that there was no brain-washing."[137] Furthermore, Gwyther's story confirmed East's suspicions that successive Liberal governments had distorted the Korean meeting to victimise Burchett.

East, again, wrote to Snedden in April, as well as his fellow Liberal minister, Andrew Peacock, though without satisfaction. As he explained to Peacock the Government's treatment of Burchett was "contrary to the spirit of liberalism" and "a serious threat to the image of the Liberal Party."[138] Peacock replied that he did not "wish" to become embroiled "in a debate on such wide ranging issues at this time."[139] However, it was not Peacock and his party, alone, who stifled debate. Wilfred also played his part.

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On 4 February Denis Warner's "The Time for a Confession" was published in the Melbourne *Herald*. The article had stemmed from the commandeering of the *USS Pueblo* off the North Korean coast, and the subsequent admissions of espionage by its crewmen. At the time, Burchett had just published *Again Korea*, which not only accused the US of escalating tensions in the region, but also defended - in part - his coverage of the Korean War. Warner drew on the *Pueblo* incident to undermine Burchett's apparent re-writing of his past - as well as his increasing influence - with reminders of his alleged Korean War treacheries.

Warner suggested that the techniques used to extract the confessions from the *Pueblo's* crewmen were not new. Burchett and Winnington, he added, had employed similar techniques to squeeze false confessions from UN prisoners during the Korean War. Warner cheekily suggested that the Australian Government should offer Burchett immunity from prosecution to draw on his expertise in communist interrogation techniques. If Burchett declined, "affidavits which have been gathering dust in American and Australian pigeon holes since the end of the Korean War should [be used to] end the story of Burchett the martyr." It was a curious remark, particularly as the "affidavits" by former Australian prisoners, which had been submitted to ASIO, contained no evidence to incriminate

[134] See the letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, 26 December 1968; BP SLV.
[135] Letter from John Lloyd, PBC, to K R Gwyther, 29 January 1969, BPC Papers MU.
[136] Letter from John Lloyd to Wilfred Burchett, 25 February 1969, BPC Papers MU.
[137] Letter from Winston to Wilfred Burchett, 13 February 1969, BP SLV.
[138] Letter from Sir Ronald East to Andrew Peacock, 3 April 1969, BPC Papers MU.
[139] Letter from Andrew Peacock to Sir Ronald East, 14 April 1969; BPC Papers MU.

Burchett, and were not due for public release until 1983. The remark prompted Burchett to re-visit an earlier, more savage Warner article, from which this attack had emanated.[140]

In early 1967 Warner had lunched with Max Ascoli, the editor and publisher of the right-wing journal, *The Reporter*. Both were concerned about the growing influence of Burchett's reports on the Vietnam War, particularly amongst members of the State Department, who seemed ignorant of his activities in Korea. Thus, Ascoli suggested Warner should write a piece on the Burchett he knew.[141]

"Who is Wilfred Burchett?" appeared initially in the *Reporter*, and then in the August issue of the Australian Congress for Cultural Freedom's *Quadrant*. According to Warner, the article partially stemmed from "those responsible for Australian security", who considered Burchett "a communist and a traitor . . . for his role in the Korean War." Seemingly, to bolster Warner's argument, his security contacts had erroneously - or misleadingly - disclosed the apparent contents of affidavits submitted by former Australian prisoners in Korea. Though damaging, Warner doubted "they would hold up . . . in a court of law", because Australia was not technically at war with North Korea or China, but participating in a UN peace-keeping action. The remark inferred that the weakness was in the limitations of the legislation, and not in the evidence against Burchett. Presumably, Warner's security contacts also told him that Burchett had sought immunity from prosecution during Holt's visit to Cambodia in 1967 - or perhaps the leak had come from a member of Holt's entourage.

According to Warner, Burchett's treachery commenced in pre-war London, when the Soviet Ambassador, Ivan Maisky, recruited him to work for Intourist. Though Warner neither elaborated nor noted his source, he suggested that the appointment was made not because Maisky "liked [Burchett's] looks." But it was in Korea where his true colours emerged. Not only did Warner's Burchett concoct the germ warfare story, but also stood outside American prisoner-of-war compounds shouting insults at the inmates. Furthermore, Warner, drawing on a 1953 British Ministry of Defence document, alleged that his Burchett had brainwashed British prisoners-of-war. He was also an employee of the Chinese and North Vietnamese foreign offices, and had personally blocked Warner's applications for visas to both countries. Indeed, Warner alleged, an official at the North Vietnamese Embassy in Vientiane had told him on one occasion that "Hanoi ha[d] referred [his] application to Mr Burchett." His recommendation was also required before any journalist could visit Cambodia, suggested Warner. It was another misleading remark. Warner had been a carping critic of Sihanouk's policies and private life. The Australian Embassy in Phnom Penh had repeatedly attempted to temper Warner's remarks, though without success. Warner, however, was not concerned about his follies, but Burchett's alleged treacheries, and so shaped that latter's life accordingly.[142]

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[140] Denis Warner, "The Time for Confession", the Melbourne *Herald*, 4 February 1969.
[141] See Denis Warner, *Not Always on Horseback; An Australian Correspondent at War and Peace in Asia, 1961-1963*, pp 129-135.
[142] Denis Warner, "Who is Wilfred Burchett?", *Quadrant*, August 1967.

The allegations stung Wilfred. He privately labelled Warner "a liar", and asked the *Australian* for the opportunity to refute his "hotch-potch of half-truths, untruths and sloppy reporting." On 28 January Wilfred notified Winston that he was making a "point-by-point reply to Warner's stink-piece." Winston received it on 5 February, with a note from Wilfred, declaring he was "finally done with Warner." He asked Winston to scour his "reply" for errors.[143]

What Winston read was a 30-page rebuttal of Warner's work, in which Wilfred dismissed the Maisky story as "nonsense", and denied shouting obscenities at American prisoners in Korea and inventing the germ warfare story. He also queried Warner's claim that the British had accused him of brain-washing prisoners in a 1953 Defence Ministry document. The only British Defence document that Wilfred remembered was published in 1955, and was "extraordinarily lenient towards [him]." Furthermore, he refuted scrutinising journalists' visa applications for the Chinese, North Vietnamese and Cambodian governments, and challenged Warner to produce the prisoners' affidavits. Wilfred's rebuttal was never published.[144]

Apparently, on completing it, Wilfred decided on a legal rather than a journalistic recourse. On 5 February, he informed East that he thought legal opinion should be sought as Warner had "slandered and libelled" him in the "most odious and damaging way."[145] Three days later, he told Winston of his intention to sue Warner for libel.[146] Within days, Wilfred had again written to East, confiding that "the dye ha[d] been cas[t]." He had "authorised" Frank Galbally to proceed with the action. It was "the best way to bring things out into the open and force scoundrels like Warner to put up or shut up", Wilfred added. On 10 February Wilfred also instructed his London solicitors, Seifert and Sedly, to "sue the Melbourne *Herald*, Warner and the distributors for whatever sum [they thought] fit." As he explained to Winston, he was "really out for Warner's blood now."[147] But East worried whether Wilfred was taking the best option. He considered Galbally too "gungho"; too intent to 'slam' writs on those whom he considered could pay the most. Winston also cautioned Wilfred about falling "into a financial trap."[148] On 18 February Wilfred's writ was lodged in the Victorian Supreme Court.[149]

The matter never made it to court. The writ was used to silence Warner and Wilfred's other critics. Yet, it also silenced Wilfred's supporters. Around the time of the writ's lodgement, East wrote to the Editor of the Melbourne *Age*, Grahan Perkin. East had enclosed articles refuting the most common allegations against Burchett, including an account of the Gwyther interview.[150] But Perkin

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[143] See Wilfred's letters to Winston Burchett & Sir Ron East, 5 February 1969; BP SLV.
[144] See the letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, *ibid.*
[145] Letter from Wilfred to Sir Ronald East, *op cit.*
[146] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, 10 February 1969; BP SLV.
[147] Letter from Wilfred to Messers Seifert & Sedley, 10 February 1969; & letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, 8 February 1969; BP SLV.
[148] Letter from Ron East to Wilfred Burchett, 17 February 1969; & the letter from Winston to Wilfred Burchett, 13 February 1996: BP SLV.
[149] Writ no 432, Victorian Supreme Court, 18 February 1969; BPC Papers MU.
[150] Letter from Sir Ronald East to the Editor of the Melbourne *Age*, 13 February 1969; BPC Papers MU.

was reluctant to use East's material. As he explained, "in view of Mr Burchett's legal action any attempt to explore the problem would now be regarded as *sub judice*."[151]

Nonetheless, Wilfred's petition had attracted some impressive names, prompting Lloyd to postpone its presentation until the June session of Parliament. Lloyd felt the petition would counter the impression, fostered by the Government, that "Burchett [was] a small-time journalist of no significance."[152] Indeed, the petition had become a *cause celebre*, attracting the support of writers Norman Mailer, Arthur Miller, J B Priestley, Simone de Beauvior and Jean-Paul Sartre; scientists, Needham and Linus Pauling; the philosopher, Bertrand Russell; the sculptor, Alexander Calder; and Labour members of the British House of Commons, including the party's future leader, Michael Foot.[153] However, the June session of Federal Parliament rose early. Arthur Calwell finally presented the petition on 18 August.[154] The Government responded by addressing matters that had been outstanding since February.

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Jim Cairns' had grown frustrated at the Government's repeated refusals to justify its position on Burchett. He had noted the leaks from unspecified Government sources suggesting that Burchett could return. In early February, Cairns had contacted Immigration Secretary, Peter Heydon, to clarify if this was indeed the case and, if so, to ask what air or shipping line would risk incurring hefty penalties from the Government to carry Burchett into Australia. Cairns' concerns were echoed on 14 February, in a BPC letter to the *Australian*.[155]

Heydon had sent Snedden a suitably vague response to Cairns' inquiry. As Heydon explained, "the matter [wa]s far from simple, [and wa]s to some extent conjectural."[156] The less said to Cairns, the better. Hence, Cairns was regretfully informed "that the Department [wa]s unable to comment on hypothetical questions of this kind."[157] The evasiveness of Heydon's response infuriated Cairns. He told pressmen that it contained no basis to suggest Burchett could freely enter Australia, and challenged those who had stated he could, to substantiate their claim.[158]

Cairns' inquiry, and the recent press speculation, prompted Heydon to approach Snedden about framing suitable responses for queries on "Burchett's eligibility to enter and the consequent obligations to carriers." Heydon was concerned that recent public comments, "without official sanction or denial", had increased the likelihood that the Government would be approached by an air or shipping

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[151] Letter from Graham Perkin, Editor, the Melbourne *Age*, to Sir Ronald East, 19 February 1969; BPC Papers MU.
[152] Letter from John Lloyd to Wilfred Burchett, 28 April 1969; BPC Papers MU.
[153] For a list of prominent signatories see *Passport*, pp 297-298.
[154] "Parliament - Burchett petition Presented", the Melbourne *Age*, 14 August 1969.
[155] "Letter to the Editor" of the *Australian* from the Burchett Passport Committee, 14 February 1969.
[156] Department of Immigration minute from the Secretary, P R Heydon, to the Minister, B M Snedden, 14 February 1969, NAA6890/6 *op cit*, folio 334.
[157] Letter from P R Heydon to J F Cairns, 13 February 1969, *ibid*, folio 328.
[158] Letter from J F Cairns to the Editor of the Melbourne *Age*, 20 February 1969.

line for "specific confirmation" that "Burchett w[ould] be permitted to enter if carried to Australia." Heydon advised that travellers were obliged to carry certain documents, though there was no "statutory requirement" on carriers to observe that travellers fulfilled these obligations. Invariably the carriers did, because prohibited travellers were to be removed from Australia at the former's expense. Heydon referred the Minister to the Convention of Civil Aviation. It held that "[o]perators . . . [would] not be fined in the event that any control documents in possession of a passenger [were] found by a contracting state to be inadequate, or if for any other reason . . . the passenger [wa]s found to be inadmissible to the state." Heydon emphasised that Australia had "registered her non-compliance" with this tenet of the Convention. As a consequence, carriers, which ferried passengers with inadequate documentation, were liable to a $1,000 fine for each prohibited arrival. Heydon suggested that Snedden should mention this in Cabinet. It was a further means of keeping Burchett out, and another deceit that would have to be kept from public view.[159]

On 24 March, Cairns asked Snedden in the House if the original decision of Holt to rescind Burchett's passport was premised on the assumption that the latter "had apparently severed his connection with Australia." He also asked Snedden to table the relevant documents, as well as Burchett's 1967 letter to Holt. Furthermore, Cairns inquired if Burchett was to be charged under the *Crimes Act*, and if so, would he be granted the necessary travel documents to return and defend the charge.[160] Cairns' questions were noted and cursorily addressed on 14 August. Again, the less said by the Government, the better. It had to mask its abuse of Burchett's rights, and protect the reputations of those politicians and public servants responsible. Cairns' questions were too pointed for totally honest answers, so glib ones sufficed. Snedden simply reiterated that Burchett had "forfeited his claim to an Australian passport by his activities since he left Australia in 1941."[161]

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George Burchett's health was rapidly deteriorating. By March 1969, he was having "difficulty reading and writing", and was talking "a good deal of nonsense", though "most coherently and convincingly", according to Winston.[162] In mid-March Winston and his wife, Mary, were no longer able to care for George, and placed him in a nursing home, where he died in late September. Wilfred was in North Korea at the time, and had not been allowed to visit George before his death. He angrily wrote to Winston, calling the Gorton Government "a bunch of cannibals."[163] On his return to Europe, he protested to the Australian High Commissioner in London, but to no avail.[164]

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[159] See the "secret" memorandum from P R Heydon to the Minister, 14 February 1969; *ibid*, folios 329-333.
[160] See the Melbourne *Herald*, "Burchett Passport Queries", 24 March 1969.
[161] See "Parliament - Burchett Petition Presented", the Melbourne *Age*, 14 August 1969.
[162] See letter from Wilfred to Winston, 26 December 1968, & letter from Winston to Wilfred, 1 March 1969, *ibid*, BP SLV.
[163] Letter from Wilfred to Winston, Hanoi, 12 October 1969, *ibid*.
[164] Letter from Wilfred to Winston, Paris, 23 October 1969, *ibid*.

Meanwhile in Melbourne, Winston told the press that George "thought Wilfred was the bravest Australian of them all", and had "spoke[en] of the day he would see [him] again."[165] On 5 October family and friends gathered at Winston's Rosebud home to remember George and toast his life, but Wilfred was absent.[166] John Lloyd was there. On hearing of George's death, he had written to all Melbourne newspapers on behalf of the BPC, commenting on "the inhuman harshness" of the Australian Government's attitude towards Wilfred.[167] Perhaps, momentarily, newspaper readers glimpsed the human tragedy and forgot the 'traitor.'

On 20 October Winston told Wilfred that Clive had "cell cancer" and was mentally deteriorating. With the federal election days away, Clive, a vehement communist, had declared he was voting Liberal, to Winston's horror. Over the following months Clive's health slipped, and by January 1970, he had been hospitalised. He died on 3 February, and Winston grieved alone. It was the culmination of a trying six months. Shortly after George's death, Winston had lapsed into "acute depression", compounded by his failure to secure a librarian position, because he lacked formal qualifications, and his decision to sell his Greenslopes Caravan Park and move to East Melbourne.[168] For a time he felt dislocated, and despaired. He confided in Wilfred, who urged him to do "something interesting . . . and stay with it." He, too, had experienced similar feelings on leaving Phnom Penh for Paris in August. "At times I was in the blackest of despair as to whether I would ever get my life and work organised as before", he told Winston.[169] Gradually, brotherly bonds firmed, while family worries, which Wilfred had shrugged off in the heat of the passport campaign, took precedence over fears of detention and prosecution. Thus, he plotted his return to Australia. It was a matter of being true to his brother and the family name.

Indeed, Wilfred had been plotting his passage for months. In mid-September 1969, as George grew feebler, Wilfred met an Australian communist journalist, Freda Brown, in Pyongyang. She was about to return to Australia and Wilfred, no doubt mindful that ASIO might be monitoring his mail, asked her to deliver a letter to Winston. It sought advice from Frank Galbally on Wilfred's right to leave Australia without a passport, once he had entered. Brown was also asked to tell Winston that Wilfred had "decided to make the trip back to Melbourne." He would fly KLM, and his name "probably" would not appear on the passenger list. When the arrangements were finalised, Wilfred would write to Winston, "mentioning the date of someone's birthday." It would be "the date of [his] arrival in Melbourne."[170] Brown was also given a letter for George, but it arrived too late.

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[165] "Wilfred Burchett Told Father Is Dead", the Melbourne *Sunday Observer*, 28 September 1969.
[166] Letter from Winston to Wilfred Burchett, 20 October 1969, BP SLV.
[167] Letter from John Lloyd to the editors of the *Australian*, the Mebourne *Herald* and *Age*, 29 September 1969, BPC Papers MU.
[168] Letter from Winston to Wilfred Burchett, 20 November 1969, BP SLV.
[169] Letter from Wilfred to Winston, 24 November 1969, BP SLV.
[170] Extract of a letter from the BP SLV. The extract is undated and not addressed, but it is obviously the letter sent with Brown.

By mid-November Winston had sent Wilfred copies of his birth certificate.[171] Wilfred had been informed that under Australian law, a birth certificate constituted sufficient proof of identity and nationality to enable an Australian citizen to re-enter the country. On 2 January Winston was told, *via* an intermediary, that Wilfred's "birthday celebration" was planned for 6 February.[172] However, on 21 January, Wilfred advised that the "celebration" had been "delayed exactly a week due to family illness."[173] He had apparently been invited to accompany an AP team to Hanoi on "conditions that [were] virtually impossible for [him] to refuse."[174] But, by 7 February, Wilfred was stranded at old 'watering hole', the Hotel Royal in Phnom Penh. The AP trip had fallen through, and Vessa had called from Paris with news of Clive's death. Though not unexpected, it jolted Wilfred, and he hurriedly wrote to Winston telling of an "abrupt change in . . . plans."[175]

Wilfred was determined to attend Clive's memorial service on 15 February, and so cabled Winston that his revised "publication date" was 13 February.[176] He left Phnom Penh on 12 February for Colombo, from where he was scheduled to board a flight to Sydney *via* Singapore. The Sydney leg never eventuated. Wilfred cabled Galbally from Colombo, stating that he had been "refused transit", because his "travel documents" were unacceptable. Presumably, the Gorton Government, acting on Heydon's initiative, had forewarned international airlines about the harsh penalties for carrying Burchett to Australia. Galbally immediately cabled Gorton, "respectfully requesting" Burchett be allowed entry to address matters related to his libel action against Warner, and to attend Clive's memorial service.[177] Gorton was unmoved, informing Galbally "that the Government w[ould] do nothing to grant Mr Burchett an Australian passport, or to facilitate his travel in any way."[178] Wilfred missed the service, prompting Galbally to declare that Gorton was "degrading justice."[179] For Cairns, the Government's action confirmed his suspicions about the deceits of those who had called on Burchett to return, knowing that he could not.[180] Meanwhile, the Melbourne *Sun* approached Winston for his views at Clive's memorial service. He simply responded it was "Clive's day" and not one for "political mileage." But, he added, "it's a terrible thing that the Government [has done] to this family."[181]

Not surprisingly, the press - with the odd exception - turned on the Government, for not only acting dispassionately, but also for turning a 'traitor' into a martyr. According to the Melbourne *Age's* Ron Saw it was remarkable transformation, which Burchett - a communist and "unremarkable

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[171] Letter from Wilfred to Winston, 20 October 1969; BP SLV.
[172] Letter from the Buttons to Winston, 2 January 1970;, BP SLV.
[173] Cable from Wilfred to Winston, 21 January 1970; BP SLV.
[174] Letter from Wilfred to Winston, 27 January 1970;BP SLV.
[175] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Phnom Penh, 7 February 1970; BP SLV.
[176] Telegram from Wilfred to Winston, Hotel Royal, Phnom Penh, Undated; BP SLV.
[177] See the Melbourne *Herald*, "Burchett ban again", 12 February 1970; and the Melbourne *Age*, 13 February 1970.
[178] See the Melbourne *Sun*, "Burchett is barred again - Gorton digs in", 13 February 1970.
[179] See the Melbourne *Age*, "PM confirms Burchett ban", 13 February 1970
[180] See the Melbourne *Age*, "PM confirms Burchett ban", 13 February 1970.
[181] The Melbourne *Sun*, "Politics banned at Burchett service", 16 February 1970.

journalist" - was unworthy of.[182] The paper's editorialists, too, criticised the Government for disregarding the law and principles of democratic freedom.[183] The Melbourne *Herald* agreed, declaring that communist beliefs were not criteria for exclusion, and that the Government's stance had only increased Burchett's stocks and made Australia look silly in the eyes of world.[184] The *Australian's* Peter Hastings, a vehement critic of Burchett's work, called on the Government to admit it had mismanaged the affair and show some belated compassion.[185] Of course, Wilfred was cheered by such news. Lloyd had told him that the Singapore incident had created "a fantastic stir", and despite the "occasional article with a sting at the end," the press had generally showed "solid support for his cause." But Lloyd cautioned Wilfred to be mindful of his mounting legal costs.[186]

As Wilfred had already been allowed into France, he decided - after telephoning Galbally - to travel to French-administered New Caledonia. On 18 February Wilfred disembarked in Noumea without incident. He had travelled on the French airline, UTA, and was bound for Paris *via* Sydney. A waiting Sydney *Sun* correspondent inquired if Wilfred had a visa to enter Australia. Wilfred retorted that a visa "mean[t] I no longer consider[ed] myself an Australian."[187] He was returning to reinforce the fact, authenticated in his birth certificate.

Prior to boarding his flight for Sydney, Wilfred was advised by a UTA official that the certificate was inappropriate for entry into Australia. According to Wilfred, the official, on being challenged, produced a cable from the airline's Melbourne office, instructing that Burchett was not to be allowed on board unless he presented an Australian passport. The cable apparently cautioned that the Australian Government would impose a hefty fine on the airline if Burchett arrived in Sydney. Wilfred offered to sign a *Declaration de Responsibilitee* for any costs incurred by the airline in carrying him, but the official responded that the decision rested with the Australian Government and not UTA. Wilfred was later told that QANTAS had also been threatened with heavy fines. He suspected that the Government had gleaned his travel plans from tapping his telephone conversations with Galbally.[188] Winston, who had flown to Sydney with Galbally to meet Wilfred, also suspected Government trickery. He alleged that Sydney Customs' officials had seized a letter addressed to him from Wilfred.

Philip Lynch had taken over from Snedden as Immigration Minister. Lynch told *The Australian's* Allan Barnes that pressure had not been put on UTA to off-load Burchett. Because Burchett was an Australian and not an immigrant, Lynch suggested that the airline was not subject to penalties under the *Immigration Act*. But UTA's Commercial Manager, Terry Lanning, told a different

[182] Ron Saw, the Melbourne *Age*, "Brainwashing, Guns and Treason: Burchett talks" 19 February 1970.
[183] The Melbourne *Age's* editorial, "The Burchett Ban", 16 February 1970.
[184] The Melbourne *Herald* editorial, "What Harm Can Burchett Do?", 13 February 1970.
[185] Peter Hastings, "Burchett Affair Becoming 'Messy Difficult'", the *Australian*, 14 February 1970.
[186] Letter from John Lloyd to Wilfred, 19 February 1970, BPC Papers MU.
[187] The Sydney *Sun* "Burchett defies Government ban", 18 February 1970.

tale. He claimed that "[t]here [wa]s no question that the airline would have been fined . . . for bringing a passenger into the country without the appropriate documents." He was partially supported by UTA's Sydney Airport Manager, Jacques Clabert. Though he denied that the Government had placed direct pressure on the airline, Clabert alleged the Department of Civil Aviation had advised that Burchett would not be allowed to enter without the appropriate documents. When the Melbourne *Sun* tackled Lynch on 20 February about the incident, he dismissively responded that the Government's position had been made clear in Gorton's response to Galbally. But the proprietor of Melbourne's *Sunday Observer*, Gordon Barton, suspected that the Government knew Burchett's New Caledonian visa and *Laissez-passer* document were about to expire. Barton, who had signed Burchett to write for the *Observer*, felt that the Government was trying to strand the journalist in Noumea until his documents expired, leaving the French no option but to deport him. But Galbally was more optimistic. He considered Gorton's response indicated that the Government, though not prepared to assist Burchett's travel, would not deny him entry if he arrived at an Australian port. Subsequently, Galbally received assurances from Lynch that indeed this was the case.[189] Galbally then flew to Noumea on 22 February.

Numerous proposals had been mooted for transporting Burchett to Australia, but the most feasible was Barton's of a private charter flight. As the convenor of the recently established Australia Party, Barton was a potent mixture of civil libertarian and disaffected Liberal, as well as a newspaper proprietor with an eye for a 'scoop.' With the lattermost in mind, he approached a Melbourne company, Australian Air Charterers, to fly Burchett from Noumea.

On 21 February, pilots Bill Dart and Graham Lowe, along with the *Observer's*, Bill Green, left Melbourne for Brisbane in a Piper Navajo. They planned to fly from Brisbane to Noumea the following day. As yet, they had not received permission from Civil Aviation to proceed beyond Brisbane. To push matters along, Barton had contacted the Department's Director-General, Sir Donald Anderson, who assured permission would be granted in time. However, when the plane arrived in Brisbane, Barton was still waiting and contacted Anderson's office. Barton was informed that Anderson was meeting with his advisory board, which comprised several Cabinet ministers. Barton was also told that the delay had "nothing to do with [Civil Aviation]", and was "a political hot potato." Permission was finally received in the early evening, as the plane was over Wagga on its return to Melbourne. Barton had considered it fruitless for the plane to languish in Brisbane. However, in returning to Melbourne, Dart and Lowe had expended the flying time allocated for their leg to Noumea. Hence, a further plan would have to be submitted to Civil Aviation. Barton suspected it was another of the Government's annoying but pointless attempts to delay Burchett's return.[190]

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[188] Wilfred Burchett, "Dateline Noumea ; no admittance, a footnote", the Melbourne *Sunday Observer*, 22 February 1970. See also Ben Hills and Kevin Childs article, "I saw that telegram - Burchett", the Melbourne *Age*, 19 February 1970.
[189] For details of Galbally's meeting with Immigration Minister Lynch see Frank Galbally's memoir, *Galbally for the Defence*, p 25. See the Melbourne *Sun*, 21 February 1970 for Lanning's remarks.
[190] "Go-ahead for Charter Fli_ht - Burchett Back Home This Week", the *Australian*, 23 February 1970; "DCA Gives *Observer* Plane the Go-ahead", the *Sunday Observer*, 22 February 1970.

In the late afternoon of 28 February, Wilfred finally arrived at Brisbane Airport. He was greeted by Winston and Galbally, approximately 150 demonstrators, and an eager pack of pressmen. Eric Donnelly had not seen Wilfred since Operation Little Switch in April 1953. He was now a photographer with Brisbane's *Sunday Truth*. At a hastily convened press conference he introduced himself as one of the Australian prisoners whom Wilfred had interrogated in Korea - a fact which Donnelly had not disclosed in his 1953 statement to ASIO. Donnelly also heatedly contested Wilfred's claims that he had assisted Australian prisoners during the conflict. Galbally intervened, forcefully telling Donnelly that he was "attacking" and "libelling" Burchett, and denying him the chance to respond. Donnelly later reasserted his claims in a statement to the Federal Police. His attack encapsulated the problems Wilfred would confront in Australia. His voice would constantly be shouted down by more strident ones amongst the military and press, and on the conservative side of politics. Donnelly was a mere minnow, yet in the days that followed, his was perceived to be true story in the dailies. Another, more telling story was securely housed with ASIO.[191]

Later that evening, Wilfred arrived at Melbourne's Essendon Airport, where he was met by family and friends, and a crowd of 300 people. He was hurriedly whisked off to Winston's East Melbourne home. The next morning both brothers attended a service at the Unitarian Church in East Melbourne, where George had often preached. Wilfred was invited to speak, but declined. Meanwhile, in Canberra, an Immigration spokesman declared there was "no change or contradiction in the Government's attitude" towards Burchett. "[T]he Government at no time said [Burchett's] entry could or would be prevented if he should reach Australia without an Australian passport or other form of facilitation", the spokesman said.[192]

In the following weeks, Wilfred addressed an anti-war meeting at the Melbourne Town Hall, and campaigned in the press for the return of his passport. He also received the odd death threat, and so was closely watched, on Galbally's advice, by the Melbourne private detective, Ted Erikson, and his heavily armed henchmen. But the threats, and the subsequent planting of a bomb in Galbally's front garden, were a ruse, orchestrated by Erikson to ensure Galbally would not dispense with his services.[193] One day Winston and Wilfred slipped quietly away from Erikson's protectors, and journeyed into the hills on Melbourne's outskirts, where they walked amongst the dense scrub and stoutly trunked trees. It was land similar to that pioneered by Caleb last century around Poowong.[194] As Wilfred walked, he probably pondered a heritage that had been denied him and began to reclaim his birthright; for it was bequeathed by place and not politicians. He was back, finally, amongst the Burchetts, flagging the end of the most important journey of his life.

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[191] "He's Home" & "Confronted in Brisbane", the *Sunday Observer*, 1 March 1970.
[192] *Ibid.*
[193] See Frank Galbally, *op cit.*
[194] Letter from Winston Burchett to the author, December 1998,

Chapter 10 The Trial

Vince Gair loved the cut and thrust of politics. Bullish by nature, Gair was a member of the small yet combative Democratic Labor Party (DLP) Senate team. During the early 1950s, he had been Labor Premier of Queensland, but lost the 1957 election, his leadership and party membership amidst the acrimony of the Labor Split. He subsequently joined the Catholic-based, anti-Communist DLP and played his part in keeping Labor from office until the 1972 election.[1]

As the veteran Canberra journalist, Alan Reid noted, the DLP lived by the "savage axiom: 'When you've got a man down, kick him to pieces so that he never gets a chance to regain his feet.'"[2] In the early 1970s the party set to savaging Burchett's reputation. He stood for policies that the DLP opposed; notably the withdrawal of foreign troops from Vietnam and the recognition of communist China. As his influence increased, Gair and his fellow DLP senators - Jack Little, Jack Kane and party leader, Frank McManus - endeavoured to muddy Burchett's reputation in a succession of vicious attacks under the protection of parliamentary privilege.

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Since last meeting Wilfred in 1957, Yuri Krotkov had been leading an eventful life. In September 1963, he had defected to Britain, where he told MI5 that he had been a member of a KGB entrapment racket, which lured unsuspecting western diplomats into the arms of Moscow prostitutes and out-of-work actresses. The team had snared the French Ambassador in Moscow, Maurice Dejean, and the embassy's Air Attache, Louis Guibaud, in the mid-1950s. The KGB hoped that the entrapment would lever information from Dejean, but Guibaud suicided, and the Ambassador was recalled in disgrace to France. On the advice of a more reputable defector, Anatoli Golitsyn, MI5 tagged Krotkov a pretender. Around that time, bogus defectors were trying to spread Soviet misinformation amongst wary western intelligence agencies. Fearful of damaging diplomatic repercussions, MI5 swore Krotkov to silence. The British feared that publicising the Dejean episode could prejudice relations with the De Gaulle Government at a time when Prime Minister Wilson was courting French favour for entry into the European Economic Commission. In October 1969, the British permitted Krotkov to travel to Washington and testify before the US Senate Sub-committee on Internal Security. Before leaving Britain, Krotkov had agreed not to mention the Dejean affair.[3]

Jay Sourwine had been prominent in the Sub-committee's campaign against Cedric Belfrage and the *National Guardian* during the mid-1950s. He was still a Sub-committee member in November

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[1] Alan Reid estimates that the distribution of DLP preferences to the Liberal Party secured the latter 20 seats in the 1958 election, 27 seats in 1961, 24 in 1963, 31 in 1966, and 28 in 1969. See Alan Reid, *The Gorton Experiment*.

[2] *Ibid*, *The Gorton Experiment*, p 137.

[3] See chapter 7, "Frontiers", for details of Burchett's 1957 meeting with Krotkov. Nigel West, *Games of Intelligence: The Classified Conflict of International Espionage*, pp 96, 101 & 122. For a more sympathetic reading of Krotkov's KGB career, see John Barron, *KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Agents*, pp 122-136.

1969, when he questioned Krotkov in a closed hearing. The Russian's grasp of English was adequate, though he had a tendency to falter when pressed, allowing the skilled Sourwine to suitably shape the testimony. Krotkov alleged that whilst in post-war Berlin, Burchett had attempted "to show . . . his sympathy to the Soviet side." Sourwine asked if, at the time, Burchett had known Krotkov was a KGB agent. Krotkov haltingly replied, "probably not exactly, but you know, he could." His response seemed too hazy for Sourwine who suggested that Krotkov "came to know [Burchett] later as a man . . . very experienced in espionage." Krotkov agreed, prompting Sourwine to further suggest that "it [was] quite reasonable that [Burchett] might have recognised you were a little more than you appeared to be?" As if struck by the prompter's command, Krotkov declared: "Yes sir; that is what I wanted to say."[4]

As his testimony unfolded, Krotkov grew more assertive. He claimed that while in Berlin, Burchett had "g[iven] me all the necessary hints that he [was] very close to the Communists, and . . . want[ed] to have a special relationship with me." Krotkov also alleged that at their 1956 meeting, Burchett had confided he was "a member of the [ACP]", though in an "illegal underground position", and on the Chinese Communist Party's payroll during the Korean War, after which he was "'equipped' very beautifully" by Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi. Burchett wanted a similar arrangement in Moscow, but the KGB had shunned his initial advances. However, Krotkov alleged that ACP officials had intervened and Burchett was granted - courtesy of the KGB - a "good flat" and the "necessary money" on which to live.[5]

On 30 September 1971, Gair asked the Liberal Government's Senate spokesman on Foreign Affairs, Keith Wright, if he was aware of Krotkov's testimony, which had been recently released. According to Gair, Krotkov, a former "high ranking officer of the KGB", had revealed that Burchett was "a paid agent of the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist parties", and a KGB operative since 1958. As with most McCarthyist smears, Gair's sought to taint others. He referred to an interview that Burchett had recently given to the Melbourne *Age's* Ron Saw. Burchett had mentioned the efforts of Labor politicians, Jim Cairns and Arthur Calwell, and the diplomat, Keith Waller, to secure his passport. For Gair, they were all were obviously tarred with the same traitorous brush, and amidst uproar from the Labor benches, he called for the names of those responsible for allowing Burchett's "unhindered" entry into Australia in March 1971 to be made public.[6] To his credit, Wright belatedly admitted the Government's awareness of Krotkov's "testimony", but emphasised that the events of March 1971 were "not facilitated by any officer of the Department of Foreign Affairs."[7] Gair, however, had already tabled Krotkov's testimony in the Senate, legitimating the smear on Burchett's reputation.[8]

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[4] *Hearings Before the Sub-committee to Investigate the Internal Security Act and other Internal Security Laws of the Committee of the Judiciary of the US Senate, Ninety-first Congress*, 6-10 November 1969.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Hansard*, the Senate, Volume 49, 30 September 1971, p 1004.
[7] *Hansard*, the Senate, Volume 50, 26 October 1971, pp 1459-1460.
[8] *Hansard*, the Senate, Volume 49, 7 October 1971, pp. 1266-1270.

Arthur Calwell was a Catholic, a Papal Knight no less, and a fine hater. He despised McCarthyism, in particular its Australian proponents, B A Santamaria's National Civic Council and the DLP, both of which had thwarted Calwell's prime ministerial ambitions.[9] On 9 October Calwell sent *Hansard's* edited account of Krotkov's testimony to Winston. Winston was not unduly concerned by its claims or Krotkov's credentials, and nor was Wilfred.[10] He was in New York, covering the debate on China's admission into the UN, when he received a letter from Calwell detailing Gair's allegations. Wilfred considered it too coincidental that after almost two years of non-disclosure Krotkov's testimony should be "trotted out just at the time of the China Debate." He told Winston that the testimony seemed part of a campaign by American and Australian ultra-conservatives to prolong China's isolation. Sourwine, Wilfred explained, was "a creator of the [anti-]China lobby" and the "spiritual father of McCarthyism" who had "started his witch-hunting career with the Amerasia case", which purged the State Department of its "top Chinese experts." His reputation, Wilfred reassuringly added, "absolutely stinks in any normal circles here."

Wilfred had already read Krotkov's entire testimony, not the abridged account that Gair had tabled in the Senate, and promised to send Winston and Calwell copies. Wilfred was obviously anxious for them to know that he was keeping excellent company. Krotkov had also linked the Liberal economist and former US Ambassador to India, J K Galbraith, and the French existentialist writers, Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, to the KGB.[11] All opposed American intervention in Vietnam. Indeed, in 1967, Wilfred and Sartre had travelled to Denmark, where they testified before the Bertrand Russell War Crimes Tribunal of US atrocities in Vietnam. Wilfred's voice had since become more pronounced in the West, as opposition to the war mounted. It prompted those on the right to further tarnish his reputation with fallacious claims.

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In early 1969, the Australian publisher, Thomas Nelson, approached Wilfred to write his autobiography. *Passport* was published in early December, in time to catch Christmas shoppers, and was indicative of the creeping curiosity amongst Australians in Wilfred's case and life. The book challenged the prevailing myth of 'Burchett the traitor.' *Passport's* Burchett was not the brainwasher who had bullied prisoners-of-war, or the communist hack who had fabricated tales of germ warfare, but a proud Australian of pioneering stock, and a journalist of uncommon integrity, who wrote the underdog's story.

Passport was serialised in Barton's *Sunday Observer*, where it was favourably reviewed by Wilfred's friend, Cyril Pearl.[12] The *Age's* Herbert Michael was also well disposed to the book,

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[9] A A Calwell, *Be Just and Fear Not*, pp 167 & 171.
[10] Letter from Winston Burchett to A A Calwell, 9 October 1971, BP SLV.
[11] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, UN Headquarters, New York, 11 November 1971, BP SLV.
[12] Cyril Pearl, "Tale of Two Passports", the Melbourne *Sunday Observer*, 7 December 1969.

remarking on the injustice and absurdity of barring "such an intelligent [and] decent Australian . . . from his own country."[13] But the Melbourne *Sun's* Douglas Wilkie was more damning, perhaps mindful of Wilfred's writ against the *Sun's* sister paper, the *Herald*. Wilkie and Wilfred had mixed, socially, in London after the war, when both were regarded as leftists by Australian military intelligence. But Wilkie's politics had since shifted rightwards, so it was not unexpected that his review disparagingly dubbed Wilfred the "oracle" of the communist world who told his story with "an unerring propaganda sense." Wilkie, however, was also critical of the Gorton Government's "puerile and contemptible ways of insisting that an un-Australian was a non-Australian."[14] His review prompted Ron East to note that Wilkie's remarks were "not as unfavourable as Denis Warner would have written."[15]

Warner, of course, had been silenced by the writ and pending court case. Bolstered by a less critical press, and rumours that Warner could not "find . . . witnesses to support anything he [had] stated", Wilfred was confident that the case would clear his name once and for all.[16] In June 1970 Warner and the *Herald's* solicitors, Corr & Corrs, obtained an order from the British courts for a stay of proceedings. Wilfred cockily concluded that his opponents were "frightened" of tackling him in Britain, where their opinions were not published, and "they haven't a chance of controlling anything." But the stay was not spurred by fear. In late July Wilfred learned that Warner and the *Herald's* solicitors had embarked on a " lavishly-financed world tour." Wilfred asked Winston to prod Galbally for details. Galbally had already received a request from Corr & Corrs for a sum of $5000 as "security of costs", to enable them to obtain evidence in the US and Asia. If Galbally refused, then the amount would be sought through the courts.[17]

On 16 August, Winston asked Galbally, if given this latest ploy, "further proceedings [were] worth the risk in view of the financial dangers and the unscrupulous power of the opposition." Wilfred's recent return, he argued, had been a "moral victory", which "immeasurably enhanced his prestige with a majority of Australians." To confront "a massive campaign of vilification and innuendo, attendant on defence of a libel action, might confuse the basic issue", he added. Thus, it would best if the "action" was dropped.[18]

In September, however, an unnamed source in London told Wilfred that members of the Prime Minister's Department, allegedly working on Warner's behalf, had approached various governments for information on Burchett. According to Wilfred's source, amongst those approached was the British Government, which had refused to co-operate.[19] Wilfred informed Galbally who, in

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[13] Herbert Michael, "Debarred From His Own Country", the Melbourne *Age*, 20 December 1969.
[14] Douglas Wilkie, "Portrait of an Un-Australian", the Melbourne *Sun*, 5 December 1969.
[15] Letter from Sir Ronald East to Wilfred Burchett, 1 January 1970; BP SLV.
[16] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Paris, 24 November 1969; BP SLV.
[17] See the letter Winston to Wilfred Burchett, 22 August 1970; BP SLV.
[18] Letter from Winston Burchett to Frank Galbally, 16 August 1970; BP SLV.
[19] Wilfred alleged that the British Government had been approached in his letter to Winston of 2 November 1970; BP SLV.

turn, told Whitlam and Cairns.[20] Though the alleged approaches were not mentioned in the mainstream press, they surfaced on 3 December in *Things I Hear*, an irreverent pamphlet written by the Canberra journalist, Frank Brown.[21] Little more was heard of the rumours or, indeed, the writ, which was deliberately left unresolved by Galbally to muzzle Warner.

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On 13 June 1971, the *New York Times* commenced serialising the 'Pentagon Papers.' Commissioned in 1967 by the US Defense Secretary, Robert McNamara, the 'Papers' were a vast and often damning compilation of the American involvement in Vietnam. To Wilfred, the 'Papers' validated his coverage of the war.[22] Neil Sheehan had broken the story. The son of a Kerryman and politically conservative, Sheehan had gone to Vietnam in 1962 for UP, and with the *New York Time's* David Halberstam and AP's Malcolm Brown - amongst numerous others - covered the Saigon side of the frontier. They supported American assistance to the South Vietnamese Government, but they were also aware that the briefings by US military chiefs were too optimistic. So they trudged to Mytho, in the Mekong Delta, and talked with US advisers like Lieutenant Colonel John Paul Vann, who had seen ARVN routed at Ap Bac in January 1963 and proffered gloomier assessments. They also wrote on the widespread Buddhist protests against the Catholic-based Diem regime, to the annoyance of the US Ambassador, Frederick 'Fritz' Nolting, and the Diem Government, and began to question America's involvement. In 1972, Sheehan, Halberstam and Wilfred contributed to a collection of critical essays on the 'Papers.' Edited by fellow-questioners, Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn, the collection marked a meeting of minds from opposite sides of the Vietnamese frontier.[23]

A more curious meeting had occurred on 19 October 1971. Wilfred was in New York, covering the China debate at the UN and mulling over Gair's attack, when he was invited to breakfast with Nixon's National Security Adviser, Henry Kissenger, at the White House. They apparently discussed China's forthcoming role at the UN and the Paris Peace Talks.[24] The Australian Prime Minister, William McMahon, also visited the White House in October, stumbling through his speech and letting his wife's dress steal the show.[25] While McMahon's performance was mercilessly mocked in the press, Wilfred's breakfast begrudgingly raised his stocks at home. Of course, there were the usual attacks from the right, led by Santamaria.[26] But others, like Bruce Grant, a well-respected commentator on Australian foreign policy, dubbed the breakfast an "incident to delight connoisseurs of the diplomatic game." Though "officially an outcast in Australia", Grant remarked that Wilfred's work

[20] See Winston's letter to Wilfred, 24 October 1970; BP SLV.
[21] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Paris 20 December 1970; BP SLV.
[22] See the letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Paris, 18 July, 1971; BP SLV.
[23] Wilfred Burchett, "The Receiving End", *The Senator Gravel Edition of the Pentagon Papers - Critical Essays*, (ed) Noam Chomsky & Howard Zinn, pp 60-80.
[24] For Wilfred's account of his meeting with Kissenger, see *At the Barricades*, pp 272-281.
[25] Graham Freudenburg, *A Certain Grandeur: Gough Whitlam in Politics*, pp 217-218.
[26] Letter from Winston to Wilfred Burchett, 4 December 1971; BP SLV.

had won "him an international reputation as an intelligent and well-informed man, despite his political prejudices."[27]

Gradually, Wilfred was featuring more prominently on both sides of the ideological divide. In mid-1971, he had asked Chinese authorities to support a visa application from the Australian-born, Harvard-based Sinologist, Ross Terrill. The visa was granted, and Terrill utilised his time in China to press the authorities into permitting a visit by an ALP delegation. In July, the delegation, headed by Gough Whitlam, arrived in Peking. His speech-writer, Graham Freudenberg, would later credit Terill with making the necessary arrangements. Whitlam's meetings with Chou En-lai and Mao, "sickened" Vince Gair, and prompted McMahon to suggest that Labor had abandoned Taiwan and Australian troops in Vietnam. Chou, McMahon added, had Whitlam "on a hook and played him as a fisherman plays with a trout."[28] Three days later, Nixon announced that he had accepted an invitation to travel to China.

Wilfred was in Peking when Nixon arrived in late February 1972. At a reception in Hangchow, he was introduced to the President by Chou En-lai. Wilfred noted to Winston that Nixon "pump[ed] my hand, smiling as if we were the greatest of friends", while Kissenger watched with "a long look" and a "half-smile on his face."[29] In one of Wilfred's wittier pieces, he wrote of the President's tendency to address American television cameras rather than his Chinese hosts. They were not overly smitten with Nixon, he added. The presidential cavalcade often motored through empty streets, and whilst in Peking Nixon was coaxed to a ballet which featured "his 'old friend' Chiang Kai-shek being knocked off at target practice."[30] The significance of Wilfred's meeting with Nixon was not lost on Myra Roper. She reminded *Age* readers that the "outlawed, passportless, . . . near-traitor" Burchett was now mingling with the likes of Chou and Nixon. Momentarily, Wilfred seemed to straddle the Cold War divide. Yet, Roper "wonder[ed] if even this distinction c[ould] stir our Government to see the folly and cruelty" in its treatment of him.[31]

As 1972 unfolded, McMahon's electoral prospects dimmed, and by late November a Labor victory seemed assured. On 2 December, Labor was elected, and within months, Whitlam had ended Australia's military commitment to South Vietnam, recognised Hanoi, and established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, thereby ending 20 years of racial and ideological scare-mongering. He also distanced Australia from the Lon Nol regime, particularly after learning that the "Australian Security Intelligence Service [had been] acting as a surrogate for the . . . CIA", and that

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[27] Bruce Grant, "What Did Dr Kissenger tell Mr Burchett?", the Melbourne *Age*, undated, BP SLV.
[28] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Paris, 18 July 1971; BP SLV. Graham Freudenberg, *op cit*, p 202 & 209.
[29] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Shanghai, 2 March 1972; BP SLV.
[30] Wilfred Burchett, "It's an Old Chinese Custom - Strike and Stroke in Peking", the *Sunday Review*, 26 February - 3 March 1972.
[31] The *Sunday Review*, *ibid;* & Myra Roper, "Wilfred Burchett at the Summit", Letter-to-the-Editor, the Melbourne *Age*, 1 March 1972.

Noel Deschamps - now in Santiago - had worked on behalf of the Americans to undermine Sihanouk.[32] After the Liberal ascendancy, Whitlam's was an unusual Australian Government, not afraid to speak its mind or challenge old foreign policy alliances. It, too, was an unusual Australian Government for Wilfred, because its policies accorded with his views of the world.

On 4 December, Wilfred wrote to congratulate Whitlam and Cairns on Labor's victory. He also requested the return of his passport.[33] Whitlam had already discussed the matter with Keith Waller, who convinced the Prime Minister that there was no evidence to support the previous Liberal administrations' repeated refusals.[34] On 9 December, the Australian Ambassador in Paris, Alan Renouf, after serving tea and cakes to his Chinese counterparts, presented Wilfred with his passport.[35] The ceremony did not pass unnoticed by Gair and his fellow DLP senators.

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Gair was one of machine politics' more pragmatic types, always mindful of stacking the numbers to achieve his desired ends. With this in mind, he launched another assault on Burchett's reputation in the Senate on 13 March 1973. On this occasion, however, Gair offered Burchett the opportunity to defend himself. He had noticed Burchett's past calls for an investigation into his alleged treacheries, and proposed that a Senate Select Committee be established, along the lines of the US Senate Sub-committee. It would be authorised to investigate Burchett's activities in Korea, most notably his role in the dissemination of the germ warfare story, his alleged interrogations of Australian prisoners-of-war, and his "professional relationship" with the enemy. The committee would also be authorised to examine Burchett's relationships with the North Vietnamese and KGB. Being a Senate investigation, Gair was obviously aware that Burchett's guilt or innocence rested stacking the Committee's numbers in favour of the non-Labor parties. He therefore proposed that the Committee should comprise three Labor senators, two Liberals, and one each from the DLP and Country Party. With his tongue firmly in his cheek, Gair assured the Senate that he was simply giving Burchett the opportunity that he had always wanted.[36] But Wilfred had changed his mind. The Government's denial of his passport had prompted his past requests for an inquiry. However, as he later explained to Winston, with the passport issue settled, an inquiry "would be an awful waste of time and money."[37]

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[32] Gough Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government - 1972-1975*, p 50. In telephone conversations with the author on 2 and 5 November 1999, Whitlam suggested that the Australian Ambassador, Noel Deschamps, who acted on behalf of the Americans in Phnom Penh, had also worked to undermine Sihanouk during the mid-1960s. He also considered Deschamps, during his subsequent term as Australian Ambassador in Santiago, with ASIS agents stationed in Chile, had assisted the CIA in destabilising the Allende Government. Deschamps, though a critic of Allende, stated to the author that he briefed Whitlam fully on the events in the Chile, but did not elaborate on his assistance to the Americans. Deschamps maintained that he was, and still is, a close friend of Sihanouk.
[33] Letters from Wilfred Burchett to E G Whitlam and Jim Cairns, 4 December 1972, BP SLV.
[34] Author's conversations with E G Whitlam, 2 & 5 November 1999.
[35] Roland Pullen, "Envoys Take Wine and Cakes in Paris; It's official we're talking to China", the Melbourne *Herald*, undated, BP SLV.
[36] *Hansard*, the Senate, Volume 55, 13 March 1973, p 337.
[37] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Hamilton, New Zealand, 28 March 1973, BP SLV.

The receipt of his passport had vindicated his reputation, and Wilfred was not about to grant Gair and his ilk the opportunity to tarnish it again.

Lionel Murphy was Labor's leader in the Senate and a civil libertarian. He still thought that Wilfred wanted an inquiry, but was not about to support one on Gair's terms.[38] Opposing Murphy was the Liberal leader, Reg Withers, nicknamed 'the toe-cutter.' Like Gair, Withers was a numbers' man and well aware of the Senate's power to muddy Burchett's reputation under the quasi-legalistic guise of a Select Committee. Murphy, however, considered Gair's motion McCarthyist and an abuse of the Senate's power, as it "affect[ed] the rights of a citizen." Withers disagreed. He maintained that McCarthyism's "greatest haters seem[ed] to be the Communist Party and pro-communists." He suggested that Murphy, in raising McCarthyism's spectre, was merely masking the fact that the Labor Party "d[id] not want their friend Mr Burchett paraded before a Senate Committee and exposed." Withers seemed convinced of Burchett's guilt. Gair's Senate Committee was to be used to substantiate it.

Another of Labor's civil libertarian senators, John Wheeldon, had detected some sinister behind-the-scenes' manoeuvres. Burchett had just lodged a writ for libel against Gair's DLP colleague, Jack Kane. Wheeldon suspected that the motion before the Senate was aimed at circumventing the writ from proceeding. He pointedly asked whether it was proper to allow a Senator, who had been issued with a writ of defamation, which was still outstanding, to move a motion "to blackguard" the other party in the Senate. Such a course, Wheeldon argued, constituted a "flagrant abuse of the rules of the Senate." He had noticed that Kane was absent from the debate. Kane's colleagues explained that he was attending the Prime Minister's reception for the Queen at the Lodge. It was a costly though understandable absence. Without Kane's support, the vote on Gair's motion was tied and therefore defeated.[39] The matter would have to be decided in court.

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Krotkov's testimony had appeared in the DLP pamphlet, *Focus*, in November 1971. Ghost-written by the *Bulletin's* Canberra correspondent, Peter Samuel - a trusted ASIO mouthpiece according to David McKnight - the article claimed that there had been a "conspiracy of silence" in the mainstream press about Krotkov's allegations, which *Focus* intended to redress.[40] But the article was not a verbatim account of Krotkov's testimony and, indeed, contained a careless and costly error. Samuel had claimed that Burchett's KGB recruitment was "clinched" by the ACP's Alec Robertson and Ted Hill during a trip to Moscow in 1957. Samuel had the wrong Robertson. It was another ACP member, Eddie, who had accompanied Hill on the trip.[41] Alec, still the editor of the Sydney *Tribune*,

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[38] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Hamilton, New Zealand, 28 March 1973, BA.
[39] *Hansard*, the Senate, pp 418, 419, 421, 428 & 447.
[40] For information on Samuel's links with ASIO, see David McKnight's *Australia's Spies and their Secrets*, pp 279-280 & 286-287.
[41] On 22 October 1974, the Melbourne *Age* reproduced the *Focus* article. The original article appeared in November 1971 edition of *Focus*. See also Roland Perry, *The Exile - Burchett: Reporter of Conflict*, p 35.

subsequently issued a $100,000 libel suit against the DLP, and Kane, as the publisher of *Focus*, accepted liability on behalf of his party.[42]

On 10 August 1972, Robertson's barrister, Clive Evatt, had visited Wilfred in Paris. They discussed the forthcoming Robertson case, and Wilfred gave Evatt "some devastatingly effective documents." Wilfred later remarked to Winston that the opposing party was "in for real and expensive trouble."[43] The visit might well have coincided with the receipt of a newsletter sent to newspaper editors in France, containing the contents of the *Focus* article. Wilfred later stated that though no French newspaper published the material, it was potentially damaging to his reputation.[44] During his meeting with Evatt, Wilfred presumably broached the possibility of instituting proceedings against Kane over the article. As Wilfred and Evatt talked, perhaps each became aware of the other's grievances and a bond was formed. Evatt had memories of the Labor split and the Catholic right's campaign against his brother and Labor leader, Herbert, while Wilfred saw the opportunity to right old wrongs, settle old scores, and perhaps even pocket a tidy sum for his retirement. When he visited Australia in February 1973, he instructed the Sydney solicitor, Roy Turner, to issue a writ for libel against Kane for damages of $100,000 over the article. On Kane's own admission, the party was not "flush[ed]" for funds. It still had the Robertson case to contest, and so sought the less costly and more politically manageable option of bringing Burchett before a Senate Select Committee, where the party was assured of a verdict in its favour.[45]

On the morning of 12 June, *Robertson vs Kane* opened before Justice Samuels in the NSW Supreme Court, and by mid-afternoon the case was over. Kane's counsel, Douglas Milne, had offered Roberston "a retraction in court", a verdict in his favour and costs plus a sum of $10,000, all of which the latter accepted.[46] The verdict was immediately cabled to Wilfred who was in Peking, collaborating on a new book with the veteran 'China hand', Rewi Alley. On hearing of the decision, Wilfred jubilantly noted to Winston that "[it] ought to give me an automatic victory too." It would end the innuendoes that had plagued his life, he added, and "help drive the DLP into financial [and] . . . political bankruptcy."[47]

But Robertson was more cautious about Wilfred's prospects. He advised Wilfred to travel to Australia after China for discussions with Evatt and Turner. Robertson warned that their "cases were different", and a Sydney conference might improve Wilfred's prospects. Wilfred, too, thought it "might be decisive", but he was not in a financial position to extend his trip. As he explained to Winston: "I

[42] Jack Kane, *Exploding the Myths: The Political Memoirs of Jack Kane*, p 186.
[43] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Paris 11 August 1972; BP SLV.
[44] Transcript of *Burchett vs Kane*, NSW Supreme Court, P 232.
[45] Jack Kane, *op cit*, p 200.
[46] For Robertson's account of the trial see the letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Hong Kong, undated, BP SLV; & C M Evans, "Kane loses *Tribune* man's suit", *Nation Review*, 15-21 June 1973.
[47] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Beijing, 28 June 1973; BP SLV.

have strained things to the utmost to make the present trip [to China] and will have a couple of very lean months during which I have to knock the new book into shape."[48]

His hearing had been scheduled for 3 September in the NSW Supreme Court. A more cautious man might have taken stock and re-evaluated his financial situation. Journalism had brought him infamy not fortune. He might have questioned the wisdom of prosecuting a libel case over a protracted distance. He might also have delved into Kane's considerable links with Australia's political, military and security establishments. But Wilfred was not a reflector on life. He was one of its doers. He preferred the odds, not the percentages, and he suffered from the twin afflictions of fearlessness and mission. They had won him fame behind-the-lines, but now they conspired to bring about his downfall. A more circumspect man would have dropped the case, and let Kane and his colleagues slip peacefully from politically life.

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Wilfred's financial problems began in earnest around mid-1972. Cramped and costly, his Paris apartment was sufficient for a roving correspondent but not for a family of five. In late June rent on the apartment suddenly soared, prompting Wilfred to consider his options. He could raise a sizeable deposit for a house or apartment, but as he was neither a French citizen nor had an employer to vouch for his earnings, he was ineligible for a loan from French financial institutions. At the time, Wilfred was eyeing an apartment south of Versailles and, in desperation, asked Winston to fund the purchase.[49] Otherwise, Wilfred lamented, "we [will] have to go back to that humiliating process of the monthly rent bill and money going down the drain."[50] Winston's accountants advised against it. He still had long-standing debts from the 1961 credit squeeze and was slipping towards retirement.[51] Wilfred eventually secured the necessary credit in France, and though the cost of the Versailles apartment exceeded his resources, he and Vessa found an affordable and partially completed house on a new estate in the Paris suburb of Meudon.[52]

The purchase coincided with the publication of Wilfred and Sihanouk's collaboration, *My War with the CIA*. Given the mounting condemnation of the Nixon Administration's escalation of the war into Cambodia, Wilfred was optimistic about the book's prospects. Its publication, however, had been plagued with difficulties. The literary agent who had initially suggested the idea to Wilfred was unwilling to sign a contract, considering the manuscript unpublishable. With perhaps a touch of paranoia, Wilfred suspected the agent was "a rogue or a paid defendant of [the CIA]" who had probably pocketed "suppression money" not to publish the book. By early July, Wilfred had re-typed the manuscript and sent it on his "usual milk-run." Within weeks he had signed a contract with Penguin.[53]

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[48] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Hong Kong, *op cit.*
[49] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Paris, 1 July 1972, & the letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Paris, 8 July 1972; BP SLV.
[50] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Paris, 2 July 1972; BP SLV.
[51] See the letters from Winston to Wilfred Burchett, East Melbourne, 2 & 20 July 1972; BP SLV.
[52] See letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Paris, 16 August 1972; BP SLV.
[53] Letters from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Paris, 1 July 1972, 10 July 1972; BP SLV.

By mid-August, he had received an offer from an American publisher, but held out in the hope of a more lucrative deal. In the meantime, Penguin had sent him an advance of 1,750 pounds. A relieved Wilfred told Winston, "such golden eggs could not have come at a more propitious time."[54]

The move to Meudon was proving more costly and bothersome than Wilfred expected. The house, which should have been completed by October, was marginally livable. Without heating or hot water, the children moved in, while Wilfred and Vessa rented a nearby one-bedroom apartment.[55] The Penguin advance was quickly consumed in rent and construction costs, and Wilfred conceded that the past year had drained his "usual financial reserves."[56] By December he was seeking other avenues to meet his steadily rising financial commitments, and his thoughts turned to Gough Whitlam's 'new' Australia.

With the dramatic shift in Australia's foreign policy, Wilfred was no longer a pariah. Indeed, he justifiably considered himself one of the country's most influential authorities on countries "from which Australia [had] been cut off through . . . Liberal Party criminal stupidity and shortsightedness." He was willing to assist the new administration establish contacts in those countries, given the right terms and conditions. Shortly after the 1972 election, Frank Galbally had approached him on the possibility of a job in the new administration. Wilfred was keen though undecided. It had to be at an "appropriate" level, suitably renumerated and preferably in international trade under Cairns.[57] Nothing came of Galbally's overture - of which Whitlam remained unaware - and Wilfred ended 1972 "broke", but hopeful.[58]

Ted Morrisby was an independent Australian film-maker based in London and an old mate of Wilfred's. They had travelled through Vietnam and Cambodia together in the late 1960s, and Morrisby had garnered support for the return of Wilfred's passport amongst Australian expatriates in London.[59] In January 1973 Wilfred's long-time French collaborator, Roger Pic, was in Hanoi filming the aftermath of the Christmas bombing. According to Wilfred, Morrisby's company had offered to buy the film for "a very fancy price." Jubilantly, Wilfred told Winston that he had agreed to let Morrisby have "exclusive use" of the film in Australia and New Zealand in return for 10% of its revenue. In addition, Morrisby was prepared to fund an Australian tour by Wilfred in exchange for "exclusive rights" to manage his media appearances. Morrisby's company would also provide facilities for Wilfred to make a film on his view of Australia.[60] Nothing came of the venture, and Morrisby would later write disparagingly of Wilfred.[61]

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[54] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Paris, 11 August 1972; BP SLV.
[55] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Paris, 27 October 1972; BP SLV.
[56] Letter from Wilfred Burchett to Frank Galbally, 5 December 1972; BP SLV.
[57] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Meudon, 5 December 1972; BP SLV.
[58] Conversation with E G Whitlam, 2 November 1999; & Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Meudon, 5 December 1972; BP SLV.
[59] Conversation with Philip Knightly, 5 July 1999.
[60] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Meudon, 14 January 1973; BP SLV.

Its failure was an obvious blow to the cash-strapped Wilfred who was eager to make himself known around Canberra, and so he sought out old friends and associates to help finance his trip. Representatives from the NLF had been invited to Australia by the CICD to address meetings in early 1973, but the US Christmas bombing had forestalled their appearance. Opportunistically, Wilfred contacted John Lloyd and Jim Cairns, and "suggested that if they wanted someone to do a stop-gap job, I could do a series of talks." He required reimbursement for his fares and expenses, and the assurance of "enough TV or journalistic activity to substitute for my normal . . . earnings."[62] Though he did tour Australia and New Zealand in March, conducting a series of lectures, it was evidently not on his terms. The tour was not a revenue-spinner and, indeed, cost Wilfred money. On his return to Paris in April, he found the Meudon house still unfinished, and the realtor responsible for the rental of his one bedroom apartment demanding three months' notice prior to vacating it.[63] It was an unforseen expense, coming as Wilfred was about to depart on a revenue-sapping trip to China.

On Wilfred's return to Paris, Alley had cabled, expressing his desire to start work on their China book. By June Wilfred was in Peking, so short of money that he had flown from Paris on a one-way ticket.[64] Nonetheless, he was happy to be on the road again, feeling like "Marco Polo."[65] It was a fleeting escape. His advance for the book from Penguin was quickly consumed by his travels, and by mid-July he was asking Winston to send funds from Australia.[66] Wilfred justified the request by explaining that books were "a big investment of time . . . during which I have to sacrifice the normal weekly earnings." However, he assured Winston that the Sihanouk book was "going well everywhere" and would eventually compensate for current losses, especially once the paperback edition was released in the US. Then, Wilfred predicted, "I'll be out of the woods."[67]

By late November the China book was completed, and Wilfred told Winston that "Penguin seem[ed] to be delighted."[68] In December, it was bought by Italian and French publishers, while Penguin was hopeful of finalising "a favourable deal with Pantheon Books [in] New York."[69] But Wilfred's optimism quickly soured, with the prolonged delay in the Penguin edition's publication, and news that his London agent had pocketed "40% of [Wilfred's] earnings on the pretext that he was paying [them] into Internal Revenue." Wilfred challenged him, but the agent froze all dealings with him until the affair was clarified. To make matters worse, the agent publicly blamed Penguin, which in response threatened to sue him for defamation. Wilfred, innocently "caught in the middle", was momentarily confronted with the likelihood of losing his house. Because his overdraft was guaranteed by his contracts with Penguin, his bank threatened to foreclose on his loan unless the dispute was

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[61] See Edwin Morrisby, "Wilfred Burchett of the KGB?; A Memoir", *Quadrant*, October 1985.
[62] Letter from Wilfred to Winston, Meudon, 22 December 1972; BP SLV.
[63] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Meudon, 24 April 1973; BP SLV.
[64] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, 24 July 1973, BP SLV.
[65] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Peking, 19 June 1973. BP SLV.
[66] Letters from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Meudon, 14 January & 24 July 1973. See also the letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Cairo, 17 February 1974; BP SLV.
[67] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, 24 July 1973; BP SLV.
[68] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Meudon, 22 November 1973; BP SLV.
[69] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Meudon, 1 December 1973; BP SLV.

resolved.[70] It finally was, though Wilfred was left severely short-changed by his agent's activities. He had also learned that the hardback edition of the Sihanouk book had sold poorly in the US, prompting him to consider other means of support.[71] On the advice of the Paris-based Australian writer, Robert Close, Wilfred investigated the possibility of obtaining a war pension, and sought advice on the likelihood of a Commonwealth Literary Fund grant.[72] But by Christmas, money was dribbling in again from Wilfred's articles, and he thought that he was "gradually crawling out of [his] financial troubles." He suggested to Winston that with the China book "making the rounds . . . things will be alright within a month or two."[73] He was "over the worst", or so he thought.[74]

But in early 1974 he was hit with a near crippling cost. Kane's legal team requested a guarantee of $8,500 against the costs of their case. Kane's solicitor, John O'Neill, and barrister, John Traill, had successfully argued that the presence of overseas witnesses was essential to their client's case. As Wilfred was neither an Australian resident nor an owner of Australian assets, he was required to place a guarantee against the cost of the witnesses' attendance.[75] Wilfred, as yet, had received no income from the China book, and despondently told Winston that he felt like "a farmer who ha[d] invested heavily in seed, fertiliser and labour, and [had gone] broke before he [could] get the harvest in." Hence, he was unable to meet the cost of the guarantee. In desperation, he asked Gordon Barton to assist, but he "politely declined in a two line letter", as did Alec Robertson, though apparently more tersely.[76] Both responses were rude awakenings. Wilfred had misguidedly thought he was fighting Kane on behalf of Australia's old and new left. Winston finally lodged the money, increasing his already substantial stake in Wilfred's career.

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The astute Jack Kane reckoned that "defamation actions depended upon theatre, as much as law." Once in court, Kane surmised, any perceptions of Burchett as the alleged injured party would be swamped by the "theatre" of the case, and the tables could be subtly turned to place the journalist in the dock.[77] But good theatre depended upon a compelling script and a capable cast of performers, both of which required money and well-placed connections. Kane's coffers were hardly brimming, particularly after his loss to Robertson, but he had his standing as a senator, which he utilised to open otherwise closed doors. He also had Burchett's rather sullied reputation on his side. It galvanised the political, military and security establishments behind Kane, for all were keen to ensure that Burchett remained a traitor.

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[70] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Meudon, 22 November 1973; BP SLV.
[71] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Meudon, 1 December 1973; BP SLV.
[72] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary, Meudon, 22 November 1973; BP SLV.
[73] Letter from Wilfred to Winston, Meudon, 13 December 1973; BP SLV.
[74] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary, 1 December 1973; BP SLV.
[75] See Roland Perry, *op cit*, pp 48-50.
[76] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary, Cairo, 17 February 1974; BP SLV.
[77] Jack Kane, *op cit*.

Though ailing, Menzies took a keen interest in Kane's case. His Government had nurtured Burchett's traitorous persona and perhaps Menzies now saw the chance to keep it alive for posterity. Riddled by strokes and disillusioned with the Liberals under Snedden, Menzies' politics had crustily edged towards Santamaria and the DLP. Menzies and Santamaria had grown closer over recent years. Menzies subscribed to Santamaria's *News Weekly*, considering its views "more sound" than most of the current crop of newspapers, and shortly before his death in 1977 he confided to Santamaria that he had voted DLP in the 1974 election.[78] It was therefore no surprise when Menzies, through "a well-known businessman", summoned Kane to his Melbourne home for a chat. As Kane recalled, Menzies was "pleased" that the case was being contested, yet "worried" about the likelihood of a Burchett victory, which he warned would "be a tremendous propaganda coup for the left." He then offered his support. Kane did not elaborate on its nature, if any. His audience with Menzies seemed more symbolic than substantive. It encapsulated the resolve of conservatives to fight the case, to challenge all that the plaintiff represented, and to ensure that their traitorous Burchett remained the established Burchett.

Kane spent the months prior to the 1974 May election preparing his case. He subpoenaed ASIO for information, but received a solitary item, seemingly indicative of the insubstantial nature of the Organisation's 'Burchett file.' He also sought assistance from the Chairman of the *Herald & Weekly Times*, Sir Philip Jones, who sharply advised the senator that his case was unwinnable. Later, Jones changed his mind and lent his considerable weight to Kane's cause. Furthermore, on the advice of his solicitor, John O'Neill, Kane used his parliamentary position to secure access to American sources. O'Neill urged that this be done hastily, because Kane and his party were likely to be routed at the May poll. Accompanied by Traill's legal assistant, Terry Tobin, and Billy McMahon's former press secretary, Peter Kelly, Kane subsequently travelled to the US. There, he met the President of the Fighter Pilots Association of America, Walker Mahurin, and representatives from the right-wing think-tank, the Munroe Corporation, through whom he located figures from Burchett's past.[79] On the recommendation of Denis Warner and the secretary of the Australian Congress for Cultural Freedom, Richard Krygier, Kane approached a retired CIA operative, Edward Hunter, a reputed expert on brainwashing in Korea. Hunter edited a right-wing Washington-based newsletter, *Tactics*, which had detailed Krotkov's testimony. Through Hunter, Kane was introduced to the defector whose testimony before the US Senate Sub-committee had earned him American residency. He agreed to help Kane.[80]

When Krotkov defected to the West, he had anglicised his name. By 1974 he was George Karlin, a very minor novelist and playwright with a curious past, which he willingly recounted for a new and eager audience. John Barron, the editor of the *Reader's Digest*, was extremely interested. He published Karlin's tale in the *Digest* and mentioned it in his 1974 expose, *KGB: The Secret Work of*

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[78] B A Santamaria, *Santamaria: A Memoir*, pp 214-215; & A W Martin, *Robert Menzies: A Life - Volume II*, pp 562-565.
[79] Jack Kane, *op cit*, pp 201, 207 & 202-203.
[80] Denis Warner, *Not Always on Horseback; An Australian Correspondent at War and Peace in Asia 1961 - 1993*, p 141; & Jack Kane, *op cit*, p 204

Soviet Agents. Barron, a former naval intelligence officer, dubbed Karlin one of the Soviet's most important defectors. Such remarks bolstered Karlin's *bona fides*.[81]

On 17 April 1974, Karlin told his story to a more judicious audience. Mindful of his safety, he had decided against travelling to Australia to testify on Kane's behalf. Instead, he made a deposition in the Washington offices of the legal firm, Arnold & Potter. John Traill was there, representing Kane, but Clive Evatt was absent. Prior to the hearing, he had had been knocked by a car whilst crossing a Sydney street, and was unfit to travel. He never recovered sufficiently to resume the case. His replacement was the Sydney barrister, Harvey Cooper, supported by solicitor, Roy Turner.[82]

Words were the tools of Karlin's new trade. Yet, his words often faltered when pressed on particulars. Of course, English was not his native tongue, so he was not always the master of his own story. Traill, in particular, was mindful of this. He attempted to ease the story from Karlin, encouraging him to create "dialogue." Karlin joked, "it's my profession", and then created his traitorous Burchett on the flimsiest of pretexts.[83]

Karlin was not "a high ranking officer of the KGB" as Gair had suggested.[84] On Karlin's own admission, he was a part-time "co-opted worker" or "informer."[85] He mingled with western diplomats and journalists, under the guise of being a "real genuine correspondent", though "not [a] very Soviet" one. His function was to cultivate westerners without revealing his real motives or KGB connection. As he explained to Cooper, it was "senseless" and against orders to do so. During his meetings with Burchett, Karlin stated that neither had "mentioned any word of the KGB." Their relationship was conducted on journalistic terms, despite Karlin's hidden agenda.[86] Cooper asked if this was deceitful. A puzzled Karlin responded that deceit was "ga-ga", and asked Cooper: "What do you mean by these things?" But on further probing, Karlin acknowledged that deceit was a tool of his former trade, fashioned by the "struggle" between the West and Soviet Union.[87] His traitorous Burchett had been forged in that "struggle", and now validated Karlin's status as a KGB defector of note, though in actuality he was merely a street-wise informer. Truth to Karlin was like deceit - a relative concept - undoubtedly fashioned by his "struggle" to remain in the West.

Under questioning from Traill, Karlin told of receiving an unexpected telephone call from Burchett during the latter's Moscow visit in 1956. They had met in Burchett's room at Moscow's Hotel Savoy and dined afterwards at the Kimichi Restaurant, where they discussed Burchett's passport problems and reminisced about Berlin. Amongst those mentioned was Burchett's one-time paramour,

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[81] John Barron, *KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Agents*, p 136.
[82] Clive Evatt's withdrawal from the Burchett case due to this accident was confirmed in a letter from Clive Evatt Jnr to the author in September 1999.
[83] Deposition of George Karlin, 193 of 1973, Washington DC, Supreme Court of New South Wales, Wednesday, 17 April 1974; pp 20-21.
[84] *Hansard*, the Senate, Volume 49, 30 September 1971, p 1004.
[85] See George Karlin's deposition, *op cit*, pp 40, 43 & 47.
[86] See *ibid*, pp 114-116.

the celebrated American correspondent, Marguerite Higgins. According to Karlin, Burchett related that Higgins, after rejecting his advances, had married a "top-ranking American general." Though Burchett did not elaborate, Karlin inferred that this was "the first . . . hint of a possibility of direct espionage." Burchett was "show[ing] us . . . he would be valuable to Moscow."[88] This was purely a product of Karlin's imagination with no basis in fact. Perhaps Karlin was swayed by Burchett's supposed admission that he was an ACP member, and had been involved in "illegal activity" on the party's behalf; or by details of his friendships with Chou En-lai and Ho Chi Minh, and his involvement in their respective struggles in Korea and Indo-China. Burchett, according to Karlin, was on Ho's "payroll", and had been granted a house, car and secretary whilst in Hanoi. Karlin suggested that Burchett had requested a similar arrangement in Moscow.[89]

They met on several more occasions, and on each Burchett supposedly asked about the status of his request. Karlin was not adequately positioned to answer, but did introduce Burchett to Moscow publishers and Press Department officials, responsible for the accreditation of foreign correspondents. Karlin told Traill of Burchett's growing impatience at his prolonged stay in the Savoy, and of his surprise when Burchett was suddenly assigned an apartment in one of "Moscow's best buildings", with a view of the Kremlin. It housed "VIP people", not the ordinary Muscovite, and Burchett had "the biggest apartment in [the] building." Karlin alleged that Burchett had secured it through the KGB.[90]

Harvey Cooper picked at this thread and others in Karlin's story. Cooper established that Karlin had not been privy to the arrangement under which Burchett had obtained the apartment and, as a result, was unable substantiate his allegation of KGB involvement.[91] Karlin also acknowledged that he had not told Burchett of his KGB status. Thereupon, Cooper contended that Burchett had no cause to offer his services to the KGB *via* Karlin, and consequently any comment by Burchett, construed as an approach by Karlin, was a figment of the latter's imagination. Of particular concern to Cooper was the damning inference drawn by Karlin from Burchett's passing remark on Higgins' marriage. When Cooper pressed Karlin for details, the latter admitted that Burchett had not stated that the marriage, or his past association with Higgins, could be turned to the Soviet Unions' advantage.[92]

Cooper also delved into Karlin's relationship with the Americans. In an apparent slip of the tongue, Karlin suggested that his evidence before the US Senate Sub-committee had been his "parole." His remark prompted Traill to ask if, in exchange for his testimony, Karlin had been "permitted to remain in the US." Without directly responding, Karlin did disclose that "it wasn't a deal like that", though he had entered the US without a passport, and on the authority of "high ranking officials." Presumably, by testifying before the US Senate Sub-committee, Karlin had fulfilled the terms of his

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[87] *Ibid*, p 170.
[88] *Ibid*, p 126-127.
[89] *Ibid*, pp 48-51 & 52-54.
[90] *Ibid*, pp 70, 94-95 & 104.
[91] *Ibid*, p 96.
[92] *Ibid*, p 127.

"parole" and so was allowed to stay. He had told his side of the story, fashioned from the circumstances of his "struggle."[93]

In another revealing slip of the tongue, Karlin claimed that Burchett's politics were unquestionably "liberal."[94] It was a word hardly befitting an aspiring KGB agent. Then again, English was not Karlin's native tongue.

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Shortly after the Washington hearing, Cooper and Wilfred conferred in London. Both were heartened by Karlin's deposition. Wilfred euphorically told Winston that Karlin had recanted "all the essential stuff" and affirmed "that at no point could I even have known that he[,] . . . or . . . anyone to whom he . . . introduced me was a KGB agent." He added that Cooper was "fairly confident" that the matter would be settled before court. But Cooper had also warned that Kane might pursue the case to "smear" Wilfred's reputation.[95]

Over the following months, Kane did not capitulate and Wilfred was confronted with mounting a costly case on an ever-tightening budget. By late September, he was wary of his prospects. Despite mutterings of an "out-of-court settlement", the case seemed destined to run its course, and though Turner and Cooper were still confident, they felt "that the climate [wa]s not as favourable as it was a year ago." Even if the court found in Wilfred's favour, they cautioned, he was unlikely to secure a substantial sum, as Kane was no longer on a senator's salary, and *Focus* had "ceased publication."[96]

It was disheartening news, particularly as Wilfred's financial reserves were spent. The trial was listed for the NSW Supreme Court on 21 October, and Turner had advised that Wilfred's presence was "indispensable." However, as Wilfred related to Winston, he was "having great difficulty in even raising a single fare[,] . . . but [was] . . . caught between the 'devil and the DLP.'" Not to attend "would weaken [his] case", whilst to let the matter slip would result in "costs charged to [him]." At the time, Wilfred was heavily in debt, with two long-term loans on the house and several other short-term ones, which were "becoming increasingly difficult to meet." He told Winston that despite his "fairly prolific literary output and [the] relative success of [his] books . . . [he was] . . . starting to slide in the wrong direction." He had hoped for a "reasonable settlement" to arrest this "slide." If the worst eventuated, however, he planned to sell his Meudon home and settle in Bulgaria, where he and Vessa had property, though it would necessitate "abandoning a house which we [had] . . . built 'according to our hearts' desire.'"[97]

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[93] *Ibid*, p 162-164.
[94] *Ibid*, p 166.
[95] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, 25 April 1974; BP SLV.
[96] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, 28 September 1974; BP SLV.
[97] *Ibid.*

He had begun ruminating on likely witnesses, and informed Winston that Keith Waller was a possibility. Waller had always invited Wilfred to functions at the Moscow Embassy, so it would be "strange if he believed the sort of nonsense Kane published." Another prospect was the Labor Minister for Trade, Jim Cairns, who could vouch of the "small part I played in making his first trade mission to China a success", and of "my standing in the international community." But Wilfred was adamant that Cairns would not be called "if it . . . harm[ed] his position."[98] Wilfred was also considering approaching Labor's hierarchy to do a series of lectures for "a sizeable fee." After all, he considered that he was fighting the DLP on behalf of the left, and so felt that "progressive friends should rally around . . . and help foot the bill."[99] But with the DLP a spent parliamentary force, there was little incentive for them to do so. Other than support from peace movement and ACP friends, and the odd colleague, Wilfred was on his own. His reputation was still too tarnished for Labor to entirely embrace. Despite all of this, he was "greatly looking forward to the scrap of [his] life", though mindful of the "sort of things that w[ould] be thrown at [him]."[100]

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On 21 October two Burchetts met in the NSW Supreme Court. One was a journalist, radical and independent, and intent on salvaging his reputation. The other was a traitor who had not only supported, but also acted in the interests of Australia's enemies. An impressive cast had assembled to vent their views on Burchett before Justice Robert Taylor and a twelve-person jury. There were correspondents, prisoners-of-war, military chiefs-of-staff, and the odd defector. Most had supported the military interventions in Korea and Vietnam, and considered Burchett a traitorous tout for the other side. They had travelled to Sydney to defend Kane at costs far beyond the capacities of his and the DLP's coffers. On Burchett's prompting, they had gathered to bury his reputation for good.

Keith Gwyther was not in court. He had stayed on his Leongatha dairy farm, consumed with the daily routine of milking and raising a young family. But he had discussed the case with his fellow prisoners in Korea, Tom Hollis, Don Buck and Robert Parker. They were attending the trial, and had promised to represent Gwyther's views.[101] Like Gwyther, they considered Burchett a traitor and said so in court. Buck suggested that Burchett had worn "the same [uniform] as . . . a Chinese officer", and had called him "a lackey of the capitalist governments." He had not mentioned this in his 1953 statement to ASIO; a curious omission given the remark's distasteful nature. Hollis, too, had not told ASIO his full story. He remembered calling Burchett "a traitor." On this occasion, however, Burchett supposedly retorted that Hollis was the "traitor", and that he and his fellow prisoners would receive "better treatment if [they] . . . went over to the Chinese."[102] Given the gravity of Burchett's retort, it was extremely odd that Hollis had neglected to note it in his 1953 ASIO statement. The following

[98] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, 8 October 1974; BP SLV.
[99] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Lisbon, 2 October 1974; BP SLV.
[100] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, 9 October 1974, BP SLV.
[101] Telephone conversation with Mrs K Gwyther, 24 November 1999.
[102] Transcript, *Burchett vs Kane*, op cit, pp 16-19.

morning the Melbourne *Age* carried the banner; "Burchett a traitor, says POWs."[103] Buried in the finer print was the real intention of Burchett's visit to the camp. There was no mention of the inconsistencies in the former prisoners' stories. The truth was securely stored from sight in ASIO's files.[104]

Derek Kinne was another whose story had changed. He had been with the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers in Korea and received the George Cross for selflessly serving his fellow inmates whilst a prisoner in the communist camps. In 1955 Kinne published his memoir, *The Wooden Boxes*, in which he recalled attending one of Burchett's prison camp lectures in 1952. According to Kinne, the prisoners had given Burchett "a real welcome." British prisoners had sung *Land of Hope and Glory*, swung nooses and shouted; "You'll hang, you bastard." After the lecture, Kinne supposedly told Burchett that on nearby "Boot Hill" were "[t]he graves of men who [had] died from starvation and neglect." Kinne recalled that Burchett "neither attempted to justify nor deny the fact of those deaths." Instead, he meekly responded, "Well, what can I do about it?" Deeply angered, Kinne felt the urge to thump Burchett. Instead, he simply "push[ed] . . . through the crowd and walk[ed] away."[105]

Kinne's rage had accumulated over the years and evidently clouded his memory. He told the court that he was still angry with Burchett for not assisting a "white man." It was a reminder that Korea was a racist as well as an ideological war, which for Kinne compounded Burchett's treachery. Kinne also related that Burchett was "rather pissed off" with his reception at the camp. In retaliation, Burchett had told the prisoners that the Americans would not be liberating them. Instead, they were heading for China. The claim apparently stunned Burchett, prompting a fraught Kinne to shout from the box, "Don't look surprised, you remember." But Wilfred did not and was confronted with an unrecognisable alter ego, scripted by others, with a life beyond his own. This Burchett had been told by Kinne that dogs ate the bodies buried on Boot Hill, and the prisoners, in turn, ate the dogs. This Burchett was also the "louse" who had threatened to have Kinne "shot", and told him to "beg" if he wanted to visit the grave of his brother, another casualty of the war. A more prepared Cooper might have asked Kinne to account for the discrepancies between his memoir and evidence.[106] The following morning the Melbourne *Age* carried the banner, "Burchett a louse: witness." He was the bully, while Kinne was a noble, though mildly maddened war hero.[107]

Walker Mahurin was also a war hero and was treated reverentially by the press. Each day, he was accompanied into court by his wife, Joan, a twice Miss Hollywood and, according to the Melbourne *Herald's* David Elias, "one of the most beautiful wives a man could wish for." In Elias' opinion, "[t]hey rarely c[ame] with more metal and ribbons on their chest" than Mahurin. Elias mentioned Mahurin's autobiography, *Honest John*, and implicitly suggested that the confessor was as

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[103] "Burchett a traitor, says POWs", the Melbourne *Age*, 22 October 1974.
[104] See Chapter 6, "The Traitor." See also Gwyther's statement to ASIO, 11 November 1953; NAA6119/XR1, item 13 folios 223-225: & the joint statement of Buck, Hollis & Parker, 17 December 1953; NAA6119/XR1, item 14, folios 74-75.
[105] Derek Kinne, *The Wooden Boxes*, pp 113-115.
[106] *Burchett vs Kane* Transcript, *op cit*, pp 31-34.
[107] See the Melbourne *Age*, 23 October 1974.

truthful as the title claimed. Burchett, by implication, was the liar.[108] Mahurin told neither Elias nor the court of his past association with Fort Detrick. Instead, he told of seeing Burchett at Pyoktong in 1952. Burchett was with four "orientals", each dressed in "a Chinese communist soldier's uniform", and he apparently "stared at [Mahurin] like a snake would stare sat a mouse." The next day, Mahurin was interrogated by the four "orientals." On the eve of his release, Mahurin was interviewed by Burchett. According to Mahurin, Burchett was dressed in a "Chinese uniform", and spoke to the surrounding guards in Chinese. In response, they treated him like an "officer" issuing orders.[109] Mahurin recalled that he "trembl[ed] so hard [he] could hardly sit down." He considered Burchett his "court of appeal", the controller of his "destiny." This was not the friendly Burchett that Mahurin had mentioned during his September 1953 press conference. Mahurin's latest creation was "a petty conniving communist propaganda hack [and] . . . a despicable individual."[110] Cooper, obviously unaware of Mahurin's 1953 remarks, did not pressure him to explain his contradictory Burchetts. The next morning, the Melbourne *Age* stated that Mahurin sought "justice" and not "revenge."[111] A more inquisitive journalist, less awe-struck by the war hero, might have delved into the roots of Mahurin's "justice", and pondered whether he was "Honest John" in name only and a perjurer by nature.

Another germ warfare confessor, Paul Kniss, was also in court and testified of Burchett's collusion with the Chinese. Apparently, Burchett had initially hinted to Kniss that his survival depended upon a "germ warfare confession." Shortly afterwards, during an interrogation by Burchett, Kniss had proffered one.[112] Burchett had apparently persuaded Kniss that it would improve his treatment. According to Kniss, Burchett, on receiving the confession, "changed" it, inserting words and making corrections.[113] He even presented Kniss with a list of "questions and answers" based on his confession. Burchett wanted Kniss to play the interviewee's part in a recording for *Ce Soir*. Kniss told the court that he refused, prompting the Chinese to have "a little conversation" with him in Burchett's presence. The recording was subsequently made, though under coercion.[114] Kniss had allegedly confided to Burchett that his "confession" was false, but the latter had ignored him.[115] Kniss also claimed that by the time he testified before the ISC, he was "completely destroyed", a "robot" rather than human, "reciting his canned speech."[116] A less cash-strapped Burchett might have summoned Needham to challenge Kniss on this point; whilst a well-researched Burchett would have tendered excerpts from Kniss' ISC testimony to covey more of the man and less of the robot. With all of the facts at his disposal, Cooper might also have contested Kniss' assertion that Burchett was "very high in the institution of [Chinese] propaganda." Kniss had not mentioned this in his statement to US military

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[108] David Elias, "A Wife Hears Her Hero's Story"; & "Wife Stands by Me", the Melbourne *Herald*, 25 October 1974.
[109] *Ibid*, pp 93-95.
[110] See *ibid*, pp 97-100.
[111] "US Pilot: I Feared Burchett", the Melbourne *Age*, 25 October 1974.
[112] *Ibid*, p 58.
[113] *Ibid*, pp 60-61.
[114] *Ibid*, p 63.
[115] *Ibid*, pp 73-75.
[116] *Ibid*, p 78.

interrogators at Parks Airforce Base in September 1953.[117] It was another odd omission, though known only to Kniss, the relevant US military authorities and ASIO.

Others also took the stand on Kane's behalf. Australian military chiefs-of-staff, Sir Thomas Daly, Sir Mervyn Brogan and Brigadier Phillip Greville each branded Burchett "a traitor."[118] Likewise, Denis Warner remarked that Burchett "had no reputation . . . as a newspaperman in Korea", and was considered "a traitor" amongst "respectable and responsible" journalists, "military men" and diplomats.[119] On Warner's advice, and with assistance from the South Vietnamese Government, two Viet Cong defectors, Minh Trung and Bui Cong, were rushed to Sydney. Both were disappointing witnesses, particularly Minh, who claimed that Burchett was a member of the New Zealand Communist Party. Justice Taylor also presented Karlin's deposition, prompting the Melbourne *Herald's* Column Brennan to write that Burchett had secured his Moscow apartment from the KGB. Brennan failed to mention Karlin's standing at the KGB, or the insubstantial nature of his allegations.[120] Brennan's boss was Sir Philip Jones, whose support for Kane had presumably blinkered the *Herald's* coverage of the trial.

Towards the middle of the trial's second week, Wilfred took the stand. As he was giving evidence "not in chief" but in response, Wilfred was "restricted" to addressing the points presented by the defence."[121] Thus, his life was reduced to countering the traitorous persona, rather than telling his own story. There was no scope to mention his work on behalf of American prisoners-of-war in Vietnam, or his behind-the-scenes activities at the Paris Peace Talks. The defence controlled the agenda and, hence, the shape of Wilfred's life.[122]

Under questioning from Cooper, he refuted the testimonies of Buck and Hollis. Indeed, Wilfred's account was more akin to the former prisoners' 1953 statements to ASIO. Wilfred also refuted Kniss's evidence, and claimed he could not recall meeting either Mahurin or Kinne.[123] In response to Karlin's assertions, Wilfred said that despite his "close relations" with Ho, he had acquired his Hanoi house and its accompaniments through the normal bureaucratic channels afforded to all foreign journalists by the DRV's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, he denied that his move to Moscow was motivated by non-journalistic reasons. The situation in Vietnam was "frozen", he explained, and he wanted to cover the "power centres" and not "perimeter problems." To the best of his knowledge, he added, the KGB was not involved in securing his Moscow accreditation or apartment, nor was he ever listed on its payroll.[124]

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[117] *Ibid*, pp 73-75 & 84-85.
[118] *Ibid*, pp 37, 52 & 67.
[119] See *Ibid*, pp 109, 111, 113 & 115.
[120] Columb Brennan, "We had Soviet Elite Flat - Burchett Libel Hearing Told", the Melbourne *Herald*, 23 October 1974; & transcript, *op cit*, p 44.
[121] *Op cit*, p 171.
[122] *Ibid*, pp 159-160.
[123] *Ibid*, pp 165-166.

During his cross-examination, Traill asked Wilfred if he valued his journalistic "integrity" and "independence." Wilfred replied that he had "fought all [his] journalistic life to have an independent status." He pointedly added that "to become an agent of a foreign government w[as] . . . the very antithesis of all [he] have stood for."[125] Traill then raised the germ warfare story. He undoubtedly shared his client's conviction that the story was a communist hoax and Burchett, in reporting it, was a propagandist for the enemy. Under questioning from Cooper, Wilfred had stated that he first heard of germ warfare's use in February 1952. Traill, who was far better briefed than Cooper, referred Wilfred to the "Introduction" of *China's Feet Unbound*. Dated the 15 July 1951, it mentioned the use of germ warfare in Korea, prompting Traill to query whether the story could be substantiated given the discrepancy in the dates. Wilfred limply replied that the earlier date was "a printing error."[126] A better prepared Wilfred would have known that the germ warfare allegations initially surfaced in 1951.

Traill also seemed sceptical about the book's reference to the Japanese germ warfare establishment at Harbin. Wilfred responded that its activities were common knowledge, established at the Khabarovsk trial. But the trial, and its story of Ishii, was still Soviet propaganda, and not yet established fact. So Traill used it to shape Wilfred as a communist propaganda hack.[127] He asked Wilfred if he had been "disloyal to Australia in being sympathetic towards the Chinese and North Koreans." Wilfred responded that he saw nothing "disloyal . . . in . . . exposing the facts of germ warfare."[128] Traill, in establishing before the court that those "facts" were questionable, had by implication cast doubt over Wilfred's loyalties.

Just before lunch on 31 October, Traill and Cooper presented their final arguments to Taylor. Cooper contended that the article had been written in "bad faith", had not accurately conveyed Senate proceedings, and so could not be construed as "a fair report."[129] Traill differed, confessing that the article was "defamatory", but nonetheless, "a fair report."[130] Traill also argued that Karlin's deposition contained the "inference" that Burchett was a KGB agent involved in espionage activity. But Taylor disagreed, cautioning that "truth and substance" cannot be drawn from inference. Without them, he added, Traill was left "with [Burchett] in Moscow, a man who wrote books." As a consequence, "the real sting of the article", that Burchett was on the KGB payroll, could not be substantiated.[131] Burchett's later critics would remember Traill's assertions, not Taylor's remarks.

Twelve questions were put to the jury. The first asked if the article was "defamatory" of Burchett. If the jury found that it was not, a verdict was to be entered for Kane. But if the jury ruled in Burchett's favour, it had to establish whether "the article [wa]s a fair report . . . of the proceedings of

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[124] *Ibid* pp 186-187.
[125] *Ibid*, p 197.
[126] *Ibid*, p 201.
[127] *Ibid*, pp 202-204
[128] *Ibid*, pp 218-219.
[129] *Ibid*, pp 237 & 239.
[130] *Ibid*, pp 233-234.
[131] *Ibid*, pp 236-238.

the Senate." If the jury found it was not, other questions, concerning the "imputations" of the defamation, were to addressed. Taylor directed that the article, in being a summary of Senate proceedings, needed to be "substantially", not "completely accurate."[132]

On the morning of 1 November, Taylor summarised the evidence for the jury. His summary was heavily weighted with inferences that supported Kane's case. On Korea, Taylor asked whether it was normal practice for a journalist to have "prisoners brought to him." The remark inferred that Burchett had substantial influence amongst the communist hierarchy, which went beyond his function as a *bona fide* journalist.[133] Furthermore, in evaluating the evidence of Kniss, Taylor reminded the jury that the witness's testimony was drawn from "a transcript" that had been written months after his meeting with Burchett. Thus, Kniss "remember[ed] it well", according to Taylor, who neglected to comment on Wilfred's memory.[134] Taylor was also mindful that Kniss and many of his co-witnesses had served their countries, unlike the plaintiff, and so, by inference, were superior types. Walker Mahurin, according to Taylor, was a "highly decorated airman" who had noted Burchett's "position of authority" with the communists; while General Daly was perhaps "in a position to know" that germ warfare "was never contemplated." If the jury considered Daly, and not Burchett, the more authoritative source, then the confessions were false, and Mahurn and Kniss's testimonies were vindicated above Burchett's.[135] Taylor also suggested that if Krotkov's inferences were placed alongside the evidence "as a whole", then there might be "good ground for accepting what [he] said."[136] Given Taylor's comment to Traill on the substantiality of inference in law, his guidance to the jury, on this and other points, was disingenuous and, clearly, political.

Just before 3.00 in the afternoon the jury returned. It had found the article defamatory, but "a fair report" of the Senate's proceedings. Taylor delivered a verdict in Kane's favour, and ordered Burchett to pay costs. That evening the *Herald's* Columb Brennan headlined Burchett's loss. Buried in the finer print was the principal fact of the matter; Burchett had been defamed. The decision would be employed to further bolster the myth of 'Burchett the traitor.'[137]

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The Foreign Editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Russell Spurr, and the former editor of the Sydney *Tribune*, Malcolm Salmon, had become acquainted in early May 1974. Spurr had been attempting to secure a North Vietnamese visa, and sought the Hanoi-based Salmon's assistance. They had a common friend in Wilfred.

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[132] *Ibid*, pp 241-242.
[133] *Ibid*, "Burchett Summing-up", p 20.
[134] *Ibid*, p 36.
[135] *Ibid*, p 26 & 33.
[136] *Ibid*, p 44.
[137] *Ibid*, p 56. Colomb Brennan, "Burchett Loses Libel Case", the Melbourne *Herald*, 1 November 1974; & Charles Wright, "Burchett Loses, Faces Costs", the *Australian*, 2 November 1974.

Spurr had testified at the trial on Wilfred's behalf, and told Salmon that the outcome was never in doubt. Wilfred and Cooper were "totally unprepared", Spurr contended, whilst Taylor was "obviously biased", repeatedly ruling in Kane's favour. On the third day Spurr had noticed that "two of the jurors put up RSL badges", while another displayed his connection with the "the Air Force Association." Spurr was also staggered at the case Kane had mounted, suspecting it was substantially supported by the administrations in Saigon and Seoul, and the CIA.[138] His suspicions were partially confirmed by the ABC's Saigon correspondent, Richard Palfryman, who had heard that the South Vietnamese Government had "moved heaven and earth to get two defectors . . . to Sydney at 24 hours notice." Spurr lamented to Salmon; "I only wish Wilf had realised what he was up against."[139] Though Spurr considered Wilfred had "good grounds" for an appeal, he was pessimistic about its prospects. "[N]o progressive will ever get justice in a place like Australia, especially at the present time when the mood of the country is becoming hysterically anti-left", he declared.[140] Salmon also harboured reservations, but felt that Wilfred had no other choice than to appeal.[141]

By late November Wilfred's appeal had been lodged, though not without incident. The transcript of Taylor's "Summing-up" had been unavailable to Cooper and Turner, so the appeal was framed from notes and memory.[142] A fund-raising committee had also been formed to meet Wilfred legal costs. It was Sydney-based, consisting of the ABC's Alan Ashbolt, the Vice-President of the AJA, Robert Duffield, and left-wing journalists, Tony Reeves and Mavis Robertson, amongst others. They were anxious to coordinate their activities with other interested international parties.[143] Their support bolstered Wilfred's spirits, though he admitted to Winston that the Sydney "experience . . . shook me much more than I felt at the time."[144]

Christmas Day at Meudon was a bleak and lonely affair. The weather drizzled and Wilfred's table was turkeyless.[145] Vessa and George were in Sofia, Anna in Berlin, and Peter was out with friends, so Wilfred's thoughts turned to Melbourne and Winston. It had been a difficult year, promising much but rendering little, while the prospects for the forthcoming year also seemed bleak. On 9 December Cooper had told Wilfred that "Kane's solicitors w[ould] apply . . . for security of costs of the Appeal as a condition . . . of [it] proceeding." Cooper estimated, at the "extreme", Wilfred would be obliged to lodge another $6,000. Furthermore, Cooper was concerned that Kane might request "security" for the difference between Winston's deposit and the "actual cost of the trial", placing in jeopardy the latter's "surety." As a consequence, Cooper added, Turner had approached the Federal Government for legal assistance.[146]

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[138] Letter from Russell Spurr, the Foreign Editor, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, to Malcolm Salmon, 10 November 1974; Salmon Paper, ML MSS6105 2 (2).
[139] Letter from Russell Spurr to Malcolm Salmon, 11 December 1974; *ibid.*
[140] Letter from Russell Spurr to Malcolm Salmon, 10 November 1974; *ibid.*
[141] Letter from Malcolm Salmon to Russell Spurr, Hanoi, 7 January 1975; *ibid.*
[142] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Meudon, 30 October 1974; BP SLVA.
[143] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Meudon, 19 November 1974; BP SLV.
[144] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Meudon, 30 October 1974; BP SLV.
[145] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Meudon, 25 December 1974; BP SLV.
[146] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Meudon, 25 November 1974, BP SLV.

To make matters worse, the Sydney committee's fundraising activities were too tardily organised for Wilfred's liking. An introductory letter was still awaiting authorisation from the committee's legal counsel, Clive Evatt.[147] By mid-January 1976, Wilfred had still not received the letter, and told Winston he was finding it "a bit embarrassing." The New York *Guardian*, he remarked, was "straining at the leash . . . to launch a fund, but need[ed] an appeal or support letter . . . from Australia." Wilfred was still waiting for the letter's arrival in late January, and asked Winston to discreetly inquire "where things st[ood] at the moment."[148] Reeves finally wrote to Winston in early February, apologising for the delay, and cautioning that despite the committee's broad appeal for funds, the response would probably be limited to "the basic core of caring people."[149]

Notwithstanding momentary self-doubts, Wilfred remained, for most part, optimistic. He had a remarkable, near-reckless capacity to disregard menace, which had served him well at the front, but led him to under-estimate the wily Kane in court. Wilfred was also prone to fits of self-importance. Rather grandiloquently, he told Winston that "the case [wa]s really taking on historic and global dimensions." In early January Wilfred had met with "two very important behind-the-scenes personalities" in the US Democratic Party. There had been rumblings in Washington about the activities of the CIA and the Senate Internal Security Sub-committee, and their links with ultra right-wing organisations like the Catholic-based John Birch Society. Wilfred confided to Turner that his visitors wanted to investigate the roles that the Birchers, CIA and the Sub-committee had played in his case. The Americans had apparently been "shocked" to learn that Wilfred's present predicament stemmed from a Sub-committee hearing. According to Wilfred, they wanted a letter from "some legitimately interested Australians" vouching that the Sub-committee had been "used to defame the reputation of one of their countrymen." The letter would be "read into the Congressional Record", and used to campaign for the Sub-committee's abolition. The Americans asked that the letter emphasise Krotkov's testimony "was a tissue of lies put into [his] mouth by Sourwine."[150]

In mid-February an article appeared in the *Nation Review*, stating that the Burchett case was "being used in America to drive more nails into the coffin of the . . . US Senate Internal Security Sub-committee." Written by Reeves, the article alleged that the New York Democrat, Slyvia Crane, on behalf of American Democratic Action, was investigating the parts played by the CIA and 'Birchers' in the Burchett case. Apparently, Crane was particularly interested in Kane's claim that a Boston-based "research centre . . . had helped compile 'evidence' against Burchett." Reeves alleged that the centre was connected to the Birch Society. In the meantime, Wilfred had urged Senator Edward Kennedy to abolish the Sub-committee. Wilfred had told the Senator it was "scandalous . . . such committees c[ould] be used to smear people all over the world on issues that ha[d] absolutely nothing to do with the

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[147] *Ibid.*
[148] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Meudon, 29 January 1975, BP SLV.
[149] Letter from Tony Reeves to Winston Burchett, Sydney, 4 February 1975, BP SLV.
[150] Letter from Wilfred Burchett to Roy Turner, Algarve, Portugal, 14 January 1975, BP SLV.

'internal security' of the USA."[151] It, and Crane's visit, marked the outbreak of Wilfred's war with the Birchers and others on the American right.

Wifred was pleased with Reeves' article, but disturbed that the appeal had been listed for the 17 February. He thought it premature, and hoped for an adjournment "to give time for support to come rolling in." He was again cash-strapped, and told Reeves that canvassing had "stretched his budget a bit too far."[152] In addition, Wilfred was writing a book on the recent coup in Portugal, which had diverted him from his more lucrative 'bread-and-butter' journalism. Thus, Reeves sent funds to ease the strain. Winston, too, was mulling over his financial position. He told friends that if the appeal succeeded, and grounds for a retrial were established, "the opposition could ask for lodgement of a further bond."[153] His funds were already fully stretched, his health suffering, and he felt "helpless and depressed."[154] Yet, he still kept canvassing on Wilfred's behalf.[155]

In the ensuing months, Wilfred was buoyed by visits from family. In April Winston visited, and two months later his daughter, Stephanie, and husband, Maurice Alexander.[156] But in mid-October, Labor's Attorney-General, Kep Enderby, advised that Wilfred's application for legal aid had been unsuccessful. As the action was a state and not a federal matter, it did not "fall within the charter of [the Australian Legal Aid Office.]"[157] Wilfred was once again beholden to Winston.

The appeal was heard in mid-November, and judgement was "reserved" until after the new year. Though Wilfred considered his case "judicially" deserving, he felt it would be "lost because of political considerations." Indeed, the appeal had political overtones. Heard before Justices Moffitt, Samuels and Mahoney, it had been contested on party lines. Representing Burchett was Labor lawyer and QC, Michael McHugh, while the former Liberal Attorney-General in the Gorton Government, Tom Hughes QC, appeared for Kane. McHugh had argued that Taylor should not have submitted the *Focus* article to the jury, because it was not a report of the Australian Senate, but emanated from a US Senate Sub-committee hearing, and so was not protected by parliamentary privilege. As a consequence, Kane's case had succeeded on a point it was not entitled to.[158]

In his judgement, delivered on 20 May 1976, Justice Samuels conceded McHugh's point. Samuels contended that the verdict was "wrong in law, and in the ordinary course, could not be

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[151] "Special correspondent", "How the John Birch Society got Burchett", *Nation Review*, 14-20 February 1975. Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Meudon, 19 February 1975; BP SLV.
[152] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Meudon, 22 February 1975; Letter from Winston to Wilfred Burchett, 16 February 1975, BP SLV.
[153] Letter from Winston Burchett to Bill & Dorothy Irwin, 9 February 1975; BP SLV.
[154] Letter from Winston to Wilfred Burchett, 4 February 1975, BP SLV
[155] Amongst those approached were painter, Clifton Pugh, Labor State parliamentarian, Barry Jones, the *Herald* music critic, John Sinclair, solicitor, John Bryson, Ron East and Myra Roper. See the handwritten note entitled 'Fund Letters'; BP SLV.
[156] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Vientiane, 3 July 1975; BP SLV.
[157] Letter from the Attorney-General, Kep Enderby, to Jim Cains, Parliament House, Canberra, 23 October 1973, BP SLV.
[158] "Burchett v Kane", *New South Wales Law Report* (1980) 2, p 273.

permitted to stand." Hence, he added, "a substantial miscarriage of justice had occurred." However, the question was whether the "miscarriage" was "substantial" enough to necessitate a re-trial, and Samuels ruled that it was not. He suggested that the greater inconvenience in a re-trial was to Kane, not Burchett. Six of Kane's witnesses had come from overseas, Samuels added, and another trial "would work an injustice on the respondent, who [wa]s in no way responsible for the situation which ha[d] arisen."[159]

Moffit and Mahoney also dismissed Burchett's appeal. Moffit found fault in Cooper's tactics. In querying whether the article was a fair report, Cooper had sought "an isolated and express finding of unfairness", which was intended to push the jury into considering if the article showed "lack of good faith." In not succeeding on this point, fault lay with Cooper, "and not the tribunal."[160] Mahoney agreed, though he also found fault in Taylor's presentation of the case to the jury, which erroneously limited its consideration to the question of a fair report. As Cooper had neither objected to the question during Taylor's presentation, nor after the verdict was delivered, or suggested that other questions should be addressed, he was also at fault. Despite finding that there had been "a substantial wrong or miscarriage", Mahoney ruled that a re-trial would be "prejudicial" to Kane, and that the verdict should stand.[161] Thus, Kane's case succeeded on a miscarriage of justice.

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On 7 July, an angry Harvey Cooper wrote to Wilfred. "[T]o say the judgement is peculiar would be something of an understatement", Cooper declared He thought the Court of Appeal's ruling unjustly harsh, and wanted to discuss Wilfred's next move.[162] Wilfred was determined to pursue the matter, though Winston was less keen.[163] He realised that funds - especially his own - were limited, and warned Wilfred that current costs "must now be fearsome."[164]

By May 1977 Wilfred had decided to cut his losses. As he was not in a position to cover Kane's costs, Winston's bond had been forfeited, and Wilfred had financially exiled himself from Australia. He told Winston that inquirers were to be told that "the judges concluded that there had been a miscarriage of justice", and that Wilfred, as "a person of international standing", had been "slandered." Furthermore, the defence's claim "that the slander was covered by parliamentary privilege was untenable", and Wilfred's current predicament was "the fault . . . of [his] lawyer." He added: "[Y]ou know (and I don't) no more than that."[165] Wilfred had taken on the conservative establishment and lost. The traitorous Burchett was securely enshrined as the dominant Burchett, and would live to dance on Wilfred's grave.

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[159] *Ibid*, pp 272 & 274.
[160] *Ibid*, p 268.
[161] *Ibid*, pp 275-276 & 278-279.
[162] Letter from Harvey Cooper to Wilfred Burchett, 7 July 1976; BP SLV.
[163] See the letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Meudon, 5 August 1976; BP SLV.
[164] Letter from Winston to Wilfred Burchett, 4 August 1976; BP SLV.
[165] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Kyoto, Japan, 21 May 1977; BP SLV.

Chapter 11 Ruptures

On the road from Battambang to Phnom Penh there are few places to hide. In early 1994 the road was dusty, severely rutted and accident-prone. On either side, the country stretched flat and menacingly open, dotted with spindly palms and intermittent signs warning of nearby mines. Limbless men, women and children occasionally hobbled by, while lorry loads of government soldiers hurried off to fight the Khmer Rouge at Pailin, west of Battambang. Stories of massacres and banditry still haunted the road. But it was far safer than the road Wilfred travelled in May 1980.[1]

He had been to Angkor Wat with Vessa and Anna, and an Australian film crew led by David Bradbury, who was making a documentary commemorating Wilfred's fortieth year in journalism. After filming at Angkor, Vessa and Anna took the northern road around Tonle Sap Lake back to Phnom Penh and onto Ho Chi Minh City, while Wilfred and Bradbury's crew travelled the circuitous southern route through Battambang and Pursat to the capital. In the pre-dawn hours of 7 May, the group was about forty miles from Phnom Penh. Wilfred recalled hearing a "sudden sound of crackers", before dropping to the floor of the mini-van with Bradbury, cameraman, Peter Levy, soundman, Jim Gerrand, and their Vietnamese interpreter, Nhu. Wilfred felt blood, and realised it was dripping from the neck and shoulder of their driver, Moun, whose hands were still firmly fixed to the steering-wheel. Moun - like the samphan-wallah on the Arakan front - never faltered. Wilfred later wrote, "he was the one person who could have saved himself", by diving from his door into the safety of a roadside ditch. Thankfully, he stayed at the wheel and "saved all our lives."[2]

Later, as Levy filmed, Wilfred stared vacantly at the roadside scene. In that instant he seemed lost. Perhaps for a moment the memories of Burma returned to haunt him. He was no longer the heroic Burchett or the ground-breaking journalist, but a bloodied and frightened old man. Burma was back with its taint of cowardice. But Wilfred was now too battle-hardened to let it last. He had proved his mettle on too many fronts since Burma, and so quickly reverted to type. With Moun safely ferried to a Phnom Penh hospital by Bradbury, Wilfred became the ground-breaker again, as the dictates of the job took over. The ambushers were later captured, and confessed that they had been assigned to "'get Burchett." Their confessions reaffirmed to Wilfred that he was doing his job in "effectively denouncing" the Khmer Rouge and its atrocities. Thus, the ambush was heroically written into fact and rationalised away, and Wilfred began to ponder why old friends were now shooting at him.[3] Perhaps his thoughts turned to the Lisbon of 1974, where Wilfred's last journey began.

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When Wilfred arrived in Lisbon on 28 April, he had no cash - only a credit card - and hoped his reputation and nose for news would pay his way.[4] Three days earlier, junior officers in the

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[1] The author travelled the road from Phnom Penh to Battambang in February 1994.
[2] Wilfred Burchett, *The China Cambodia Vietnam Triangle*, pp 213-214.
[3] Wifred Burchett, *ibid*, and David Bradbury's film, *Public Enemy No 1*, 1981.
[4] Conversation with Rainer Burchett, 30 June 1999.

Portuguese military had deposed the fascist dictator, Marcello Caetano, in what became heralded as the Captains' Coup. After forty-eight years Portuguese fascism had abruptly ended. Within days Wilfred had interviewed the coup's "political architect", Major Melo Antunes, its military *maestro*, Captain Otelo de Carvalho, and Colonel Vasco dos Santos Goncalves, who had been appointed Prime Minister in the post-coup military junta of General Antonio de Spinola.[5]

Under Caetano inflation had peaked at 30%, while industrial and agricultural development had stagnated. There had also been rumblings in the ranks of the armed forces. In July 1973 a government decree had promoted university graduates, with a minimum of six months' military training, over officers who had served in the field. Hence, junior officers stationed in the colonies started to question their commitment to the regime and its colonial wars in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. The wars had sapped the country's coffers and pricked the national conscience. Throughout the 1960s, half of Portugal's budget was spent on prosecuting the wars, and by 1968 130,000 Portuguese troops were stationed in Africa.[6] As Wilfred later noted, it was the realisation that this commitment was draining the Portuguese economy that prompted leftists and junior military officers to revolt.[7] Service in Africa had radicalised the coup's leaders. Antunes and de Carvahlo had served in Angola and Guinea-Bissau, and had returned to Portugal convinced that the wars required political rather than military solutions.

As Wilfred explained to Winston, the coup was "a most fascinating story", and he boasted of being one of the few "who kn[ew] it from the inside."[8] But not many publishers - other than those in Portugal - shared his fascination.[9] By mid-February 1975, Wilfred had completed his account, *The Captains' Coup*, but lamented to Winston that though it had been sent to "various publishers . . . there [was] no great enthusiasm for Portugal as a subject."[10] Thus, his attention turned to the fates of Portugal's former African colonies.

On 15 January 1975, Wilfred was in the Portuguese seaside resort of Alvor, to cover the signing of an agreement that would end 500 years of Portuguese rule in Angola. Portugal had already agreed to grant independence to Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. The situation in Angola, however, was more fractious, with three movements - the Angolan National Liberation Front (FNLA) led by Holden Roberto, Jonas Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and Agostino Neto's Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) - vying for power. In October 1974, each had agreed to suspend hostilities and establish a joint provisional administration in

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[5] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 294.
[6] See Basil Davidson's essay, "The politics of armed struggle: National liberation in the African colonies of Portugal", p 20; and Anthony R Wilkinson, "From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe", p 215 in *Southern Africa: The Politics of Revolution*, (ed) Basil Davidson, Joe Slovo, & Anthony B Wilkinson.
[7] "Wilfred Burchett on Portugal: An Interview with Mavis Robertson in November 1974", *Australian Left Review*, March-April 1975, No. 46, p 5; & Wilfred Burchett, *op cit*, pp 61-62.
[8] Letters from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Meudon, 28 September 1974; & Lisbon, 2 October 1974, BP SLV.
[9] Letter from Wifred to Winston Burchett, Meudon, 29 January 1975, BP SLV.
[10] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Meudon, 19 February 1975, BP SLV.

Luanda under Portuguese control. At Alvor, they further resolved to work towards the establishment of full independence by 11 November 1975.

By March, however, Angola's fickle unity had collapsed into civil war. Roberto's FNLA forces, with the backing of the Zairean Army, had occupied the port city of Ambriz, 150 miles south of the Angola-Zaire border, and were advancing towards MPLA-held Luanda. They were to join Savimbi's UNITA forces, which were advancing from the south, for an assault on the capital. On the 12 July, however, the MPLA counter-attacked, and drove the joint force from Luanda's doorstep. In Lisbon, the Portuguese Government, despite reinforcing its commitment to Angolan independence, suspended the Alvor Agreement. By early August, South African troops had entered Angola in support of UNITA. Together, they planned to join Roberto's forces, which were again advancing from the north, in an attack on Luanda. Both advances were thwarted by the MPLA, bolstered by the arrival of 82 Cuban advisers. On 11 November Neto proclaimed the People's Republic of Angola in Luanda. The following day, Roberto established the People's Democratic Republic in Ambriz. Later, he and Savimbi formed a Joint National Council for the Revolution in the southern interior city of Huambo.[11]

When Wilfred arrived in Luanda in February 1976, the war had escalated. The MPLA, reinforced by the arrival of 650 Cuban troops, had captured Ambriz in the north, whilst in the south UNITA had abandoned Huambo, and the South Africans had retreated into Namibia. In mid-February, Wilfred travelled with MPLA militias through recently surrendered UNITA territory. It was a harrowing journey. In the former UNITA stronghold of Bie he watched as bodies of recently shot MPLA supporters were exhumed, and listened to atrocity stories. In Huambo, he noted, UNITA troops had "massacred every political opponent on whom they could lay their hands, including [the] wives and children of MPLA sympathisers." Shocked by the savagery, Wilfred cursed UNITA as a tribally based, historically regressive force, which fought not for the national interest, but to extend the influence of Savimbi's Ovimbundu tribe, and to bolster the fortunes of his Portuguese and South African backers.[12]

Roberto's power was also tribally based. He was the nephew of Barros Necca, the co-founder of the Union of People in Northern Angola (UDNA), whose support was drawn from the Bakongo and Zambo tribes in the country's north-west. In 1958 the UDNA was dissolved, and in its place emerged the Union of the Peoples of Angola (UPA) under Roberto's leadership. In 1963 the UPA combined with the Northern Angolan Democratic Party to form the FNLA, and was immediately recognised by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) as Angola's official liberation movement. But in November 1971, Roberto purged his officer corps, which weakened the FNLA's military clout. Into the breach stepped Neto's MPLA.

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[11] For a pro-MPLA chronology of events see *Southern Africa Stands Up*, p xi-xxxviii; & p 77.
[12] Wilfred Burchett, "Angola's biggest victory yet", Luanda, the New York *Guardian*, 18 February 1976; & the letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Luanda, 10 March 1975, SP SLV. See also Wilfred Burchett's "Patriots sweep through Angola", Luanda, the New York *Guardian*, 25 February 1976, & *Southern Africa Stands Up*, pp 77 & 33.

Wilfred considered it Angola's only nationalist movement. His Agostinho Neto was a curious mixture; "socially timid", with a "gentle smile" and "hesitant speech", and a "dogged stubbornness" that concealed a "singleness of purpose." Neto was a doctor by trade, and a poet by nature; and like so many of Wilfred's revolutionary heroes, had sacrificed the trappings of privilege for a life of struggle, exile and imprisonment. When the MPLA was established in December 1956, in Leopoldville, Neto was in prison. He was again in gaol in 1961, when the MPLA moved from political to armed struggle. In April 1964 the Tanzanian President, Julius Nyerere, allowed the MPLA to establish its base in Dar es Salaam. With assistance from the Zambian President, Kenneth Kaunda, supplies passed from Tanzania, through Zambia, and onto MPLA cadres in Angolan border areas. In 1968 the MPLA moved its headquarters to Angola, and displaced the FNLA as the OAU's legitimate liberation movement. Wilfred maintained that Neto, unlike Roberto and Savimbi, appealed to all Angolans, regardless of their "political tendencies, economic circumstances, race, sex, [and] age."[13] The prolonged struggle against the Portuguese, Wilfred argued, had eroded tribal allegiances, allowing "an all-Angolan national feeling" to evolve, which the MPLA, with its "sound political base [and] . . . clear national line", most adequately represented.[14]

The MPLA was also part of Wilfred's grand and irreversible sweep of history. National liberation movements, he justifiably argued, had swept the French and Americans from Indo-China, the Portuguese from Africa, and would inevitably tumble Ian Smith's regime in Rhodesia and Johannes Vorster's in South Africa.[15] "[T]he torch of liberation in its modern phase [had been] brought from Vietnam to Africa", Wilfred declared, and would "cut across geographic, racial, linguistic and religious boundaries", to form an African revolutionary brotherhood, each assisting the others' liberation struggles. In Rhodesia, the Zimbabwean African People's Union (ZAPU) and Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU) had buried their tribal and ideological differences to fight for national goals. Across the border, Samora Machel's Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FREMLINO), which had already secured independence, was assisting the Zimbabweans. Wilfred met Machel in Maputo. He had the same "informality" as Ho and was well-versed in Giap's "people's war." He was also bound to assist his fellow-African revolutionaries.[16] Like Neto and Ho, Machel was another of Wilfred's moral elect; prepared to give of himself for the greater good of others. It was a sentiment not shared by those on the other side.

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By coincidence, John Stockwell had followed Wilfred from Laos into Vietnam and onto Africa. In the mid-1970s Stockwell had been appointed chief of the CIA's Angola Task Force. It was becoming an important Agency posting. In July 1975, the CIA's director, William Colby, had forecast that the Soviets and Cubans would provide the MPLA with $US225 million in military assistance over

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[13] Wilfred Burchett, *ibid*, pp 46 & 12.
[14] *Ibid*, p 123; & "Patriots sweep through Angola", *op cit*.
[15] See the letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, *op cit*.
[16] Wilfred Burchett, *Southern Africa Stands Up*, p ix. For details of Burchett's interview with Samora Machel see *Southern Africa Stands Up*, pp 169 - 176.

the next four months. In contrast, the Americans could only muster a paltry $US25 million to bolster Roberto and Savimbi's stocks, which was substantially shy of the $US100 million which, according to Colby's estimates, it would take to win the war. As a makeshift measure, Colby allocated $US7 million for the recruitment of French and Portuguese mercenaries to fight with FNLA and UNITA forces. Stockwell rightly considered it "a senseless gesture."[17]

By late January 1976 those who had been recruited through French channels were fighting with UNITA's forces, but the Portuguese end of the operation had failed. However, a disturbed Stockwell had learned that a new mercenary force had arrived in Angola; 150 British and American "low" quality types, not accounted for in CIA documents. With the Agency's activities under congressional scrutiny, Stockwell was concerned that the mercenaries' appearance might prompt potentially damaging inquiries into the misappropriation of CIA funds. He was undoubtedly mindful that on 19 December the US Senate had amended the Defence Appropriation Bill, to stop the Ford Administration's assistance of FNLA and UNITA forces.[18] Stockwell was certain that the FNLA, and not the CIA, had mustered this latest mercenary contingent. Nonetheless, he suspected Holden Roberto, in enticing the mercenaries, had drawn on funds which the CIA had directly channelled into FNLA coffers for other purposes.[19]

According to Wilfred, the mercenaries' arrival indicated a shift in US Cold War strategy. With the fall of Saigon in April 1975, he argued, "the direct use of [American] force . . . had been seriously devalued." Congress was unwilling to sanction "further overseas military adventures", and so mercenaries were assigned by the CIA and US military - without congressional approval - to clandestinely keep the communist menace at bay. Wilfred considered Angola's mercenary problem stemmed from Alvar, which had "accorded the FNLA and UNITA a status far beyond . . . their respective contributions to the national liberation struggle." Without solid national foundations, he suggested, both movements had to rely on CIA money and foreign mercenaries to bolster their forces. Of course, the MPLA also had its foreign combatants. But Wilfred excused the Cuban contribution, by placing it within history's continuum of heroic national liberation struggles. Whilst the mercenaries were lured to Angola by greed alone, Wilfred's noble Cubans were selfless defenders of a just cause.[20]

Shortly after his arrival in Angola, Wilfred noticed that the MPLA had captured a band of British and American mercenaries south of the Angola-Zaire border. They were apparently fighting for the FNLA under the command of Costas Georgiou, better known as Colonel Callen. Greek-born, but a

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[17] Jeffrey Jones-Rhodri, *The CIA and American Democracy*, p 206; & John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, p 216-217.
[18] See Stockwell, *ibid*, p 24. On 25 September Leslie Gelb in the *New York Times* had stated that the CIA was spending $50 million on covert operations in Angola. The claims were repeated by Walter Pincus, in the *Washington Post*, on 8-9 November.
[19] John Stockwell, *ibid*, pp 220-224.
[20] *Whores of War*, pp 82, 14 & 18.

British subject, Callen had been assigned by Roberto to command the FNLA's northern front. The capture came after Callan had shot members of his contingent for refusing to fight.[21]

In June the MPLA tried Callan's band before the People's Tribunal in Luanda. Wilfred considered the trial necessary, to highlight the insidious and savage nature of mercenary operations.[22] He had met Derek Roebuck, a legal academic at the University of Tasmania. Roebuck had an interest in war crimes and was a member of the International Commission of Inquiry on Mercenaries. The Commission approached him and Wilfred to cover the Luanda trial, and investigate the mercenary trade, in general.[23] At the time, the thriller writer, Frederick Forsyth, had published *Dogs of War*, a quick-paced potboiler loosely glamorising the exploits of the infamous Congo mercenary, 'Mad' Mike Hoare. Roebuck and Wilfred's story would tell the other side of the mercenary tale. Forsyth's 'dogs' would become Wilfred and Roebuck's "whores of war."

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In June 1975, advertisements began appearing in London's more populist dailies for ex-commandos. The advertisements had been placed by Security Advisory Services, which was located above a laundry opposite Sandhurst Military College. The company reputedly specialised in the recruitment of security and intelligence personnel, to meet the growing demand for counter-insurgency operations, and was staffed by shady, ex-military types. Amongst them, was Norman 'Nick' Hall. He had served with the British Army in Ulster, where he was dismissed and subsequently sentenced to two years' imprisonment, for trafficking arms to the Protestant Ulster Volunteers. Hall was a confidante of Holden Roberto, and had ostensibly masterminded the British mercenary venture.[24]

From evidence produced at the Luanda trial, and reports filtering through from investigative journalists in Britain, Wilfred and Roebuck suspected that the operation had also been tacitly sanctioned by American and British authorities. The pair correctly alleged that British Immigration officials had allowed 'bail-jumpers' and convicted criminals to leave the country. Furthermore, some mercenaries had departed without British passports.[25] Given Wilfred's past travel problems, the ease with which the mercenaries slipped across borders without the required documents sharpened his suspicions. They were further aroused when Banks told the *News of the World* that MI6 was "interested" in the operation, and had requested two of its agents be allowed to participate. Banks claimed that one of the agents died of a heart attack whilst on patrol in Angola. Though Banks's story appeared in Britain's most sensationalist paper, it was later confirmed by a surviving mercenary, Keith Henderson. Wilfred and Roebuck also thought the story "authentic." On further investigation they

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[21] *Ibid, pp 86 & 65.*
[22] *Ibid,* p 89.
[23] As Wilfred and Roebuck explained, *Whores* intended to investigate "the present activities of mercenaries, their recruiters and those who pay them." See *op cit,* p 6.
[24] *Ibid,* pp 28-30.
[25] Wilfred and Roebuck alleged that one mercenary, Derek John Barker, told Heathrow Airport officials that he was member of the Manchester Social football team. Baker was allowed to leave Britain without a passport, and despite his criminal record. See *ibid,* pp 41-43.

discovered that a 'D Notice', forbidding the release of details, had been placed on the story. Furthermore, Wilfred and Roebuck suspected that the US Embassy in London was the ultimate orchestrator of the operation.[26] They noted that the British mercenary, Derek Barker, and his American colleague, Gary Acker, told the Luanda Tribunal that their recruiters had inferred the operation was financed by CIA money. Unbeknown to Wilfred, John Stockwell had also reached the same conclusion.

The Luanda Tribunal was a depressing affair for Wilfred. In the dock were the dregs of capitalism; the "rejects and victims of a social system that condemned humans by the millions to unemployment and a drab existence on the borderline of hunger and despair."[27] Wilfred had seen semblances of capitalism's savagery in Depression Australia and post-war Berlin. Now those semblances were embodied in those who stood before him in the dock. There was "the inadequate, the discredited, the cruel, the bully, the unimaginative, the fantasist, the racist, and above all the greedy."[28] They had been defeated by "combatants with . . . higher political, moral and ideological values", who had fought for the cause and not for "dollars and booty."[29]

Gus Grillo was an American mercenary. According to Wilfred, Grillo had the wit to be humble before the People's Tribunal, and the sense to portray himself as a victim of American society. He realised that it too was on trial. He was a Cuban American, and told the Tribunal of the racist taunts he had suffered as a child. He also told of his service in Vietnam, bouts of unemployment, and life of petty crime. "US society . . . is a monster", he declared, in which the strong prospered at the expense of the weak. He told of his shame on meeting an MPLA soldier, who had "volunteered" to fight "for nothing", while he fought for money. A mercenary, Grillo declared, was similar to a "prostitute." American capitalism had made him into a whore of war.[30]

Grillo was spared for his efforts. Four of his mercenary colleagues were sentenced to death, whilst the remainder received hefty prison terms. The four, including an unrepentant Callan, were shot in Luanda's football stadium on 10 July. As revolutionary justice was being served, however, the threads that bound Wilfred's revolutionary brotherhood together were beginning to unravel.

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In January 1973, Wilfred and the Peking-based Rewi Alley had signed a contract with Penguin to write a book on China. Despite harbouring some reservations about the Cultural Revolution's more intemperate aspects, Wilfred thought that China was entering "a most interesting phase" in its development. As he explained to Winston, it had swept aside the "self-perpetuati[ng] privileged, governing class", and its "rigid bureaucracy", . . . cut off from . . . the people." He felt that

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[26] *Ibid*, pp 47-49 & 35.
[27] *Ibid*, p 53.
[28] *Ibid*, p 8.
[29] *Ibid*, pp 116 & 83.
[30] *Ibid*, pp 73-74.

the Chinese were developing "something new in history"; a government that served people, not entrenched elites.[31] When Wilfred arrived in China in mid-1973, to commence work on the book, he was favourably struck by the "the injection of humanism into life at every level[,] in contrast to the dehumanisation [and] depersonalisation of life in the West." "Quality of life [wa]s to be the measure", he mooted to Winston, not the size of the gross national product.[32]

Wilfred and Alley's manuscript was completed by November 1973, and in early December, Wilfred told Winston that "Penguin's initial reactions [were] excellent."[33] But the book's publication was repeatedly delayed, to Wilfred's frustration. *China: The Quality of Life* finally appeared in March 1975, and was a well-chronicled but dryly written tribute to Communist China's pioneering spirit.[34] It was also a dated work, as Wilfred was beginning to have his doubts about disturbing drifts in China's foreign policy.

Its architect, Chou En-lai, died on 8 January 1976. In a front page tribute in the New York *Guardian* Wilfred dubbed him a "giant among revolutionaries", who was admired for his "calm analytical mind", and "dignity and simplicity." He also had "incomparable experience in diplomacy", and was a supporter of national liberation movements. Like Ho, he was irreplaceable.[35] Deng Hsiao-ping, who had been temporarily purged during the Cultural Revolution, had become China's new foreign minister. In May 1975 he had provided military aid and advisers to Holden Roberto's FNLA.

On 5 May 1976, Wilfred wrote, arguably, one of his most important pieces in the New York *Guardian*. His article asserted that Chinese diplomacy, in the post-Chou era, was making "some serious . . . mistakes", and "getting deeper into the mire by trying to defend them." The most notable, of course, was Deng's support for the FNLA, which had prompted "a serious decline in China's prestige" amongst "third world" African nations. Originally, Wilfred recalled, Chou had backed the MPLA, but with the establishment of relations with Washington, and Soviet assistance to Neto, China's allegiances shifted to Roberto. China had accused the Soviets of destabilising the Alvor Agreement, by massively bolstering the MPLA. Wilfred countered that Soviet support was tokenistic, in comparison to that given by the South Africans and Americans to UNITA and the FNLA. As a consequence, Wilfred suggested that China's fear of Soviet expansionism in Africa and elsewhere had blinkered its foreign policy perspective. In 1957, Wilfred recounted, Chou had expressed China's commitment "to support . . . people which had taken to revolutionary struggle and were the object of counter-revolutionary intervention." In Angola Deng had forgotten Chou's maxim, bolstering the counter-revolutionary Roberto against the true national liberationist, Neto. China had rejected its "own stated principles of international proletarian solidarity", Wilfred declared.[36] His revolutionary brothers were

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[31] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary, Peking, 28 March 1971; BP SLV.
[32] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary, Peking, 19 June 1973; BP SLV.
[33] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary, Meudon, 22 November & 1 December 1973; BP SLV.
[34] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, 10 March 1975; BP SLV.
[35] Wilfred Burchett, "Comrade Chou En-lai is Dead", the New York *Guardian*, 21 January 1976.
[36] Wilfred Burchett, "China's Foreign Policy", the New York *Guardian*, 5 May 1976.

beginning to wrangle amongst themselves, and the certainty around which he had built his world was beginning to come asunder.

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The New York *Guardian* was one of those certainties. In October 1977, it announced that Wilfred, under its sponsorship, was about to embark on a two-month lecture tour of the US. The State Department had assured Wilfred and the *Guardian* that it had "no objections" to the tour.[37] It commenced on 21 October in New York, and travelled extensively throughout the country, preaching mainly to the converted on Vietnam, southern Africa and Korea, and the inadequacies of American foreign policy. But it was also accompanied by vociferous attacks from the Catholic right's John Birch Society, and the Hearst and Murdoch press, which were intended to further savage Wilfred's reputation.

In November, the Birch Society's pamphlet, the *Weekly Review of the News*, alleged Burchett was a KGB agent, and the tour "his latest assignment for the International Communist conspiracy." His KGB involvement, the *Review* erroneously claimed, had been established at the Kane trial. In a repeat of Vince Gair's tactic, the Republican Congressman and member of the Society's National Congress, Larry McDonald, read the attacks onto the Congressional record. The allegations were repeated in mid-November, by Hearst and Murdoch's papers.[38]

Wilfred vigorously countered in the *Guardian* that his action against Kane had uncovered not a "shred of evidence" to connect him with the KGB. Such smears, he added, were "the small prices . . . pa[id] to retain one's journalistic integrity while pursuing the truth from the people's side of the barricades." He then disclosed, "the only intelligence agency which ever tried to recruit [him] was the CIA, during the Korean Armistice Talks . . . for a down-payment of $100,000." The *New York Times'* columnist, Jack Anderson, had leaked the story in February 1976. Anderson had alleged that Major-General Balckshear Bryan, a US negotiator at Panmunjon, masterminded the scheme with assistance from US correspondents and the CIA. Burchett, however, had given "no encouragement" that he was prepared to come across, despite the sizeable inducement on offer.[39]

Nonetheless, the attacks continued. On 16 November, Rupert Murdoch's *New York Post* carried a front-page banner; "Soviet Agent Tours US with State Department Help." By William Hefferman, it was the first in a series of four articles detailing Burchett's apparent KGB career, and his treasonous activities in Korea and Vietnam. The series coincided with an even more extraordinary

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[37] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Meudon, 12 October 1977, BA. Also see "Burchett to tour US cities", *National Guardian*, 5 October 1977. The tour was conducted under the auspices of the the Wilfred Burchett Support Committee.

[38] For details of the Rees's attacks see "Burchett: He Rebuts Right Attacks", the New York *Guardian*, 14 December 1977. For details of the other attacks see the New York *Guardian* 'Viewpoint', "Burchett labelled a KGB agent", the New York *Guardian*, 16 November 1977.

[39] "Burchett Snubs CIA Bribe", the New York *Guardian*, 18 February 1976; & Wilfred Burchett, "The Jack Anderson Story is Basically True", the New York *Guardian*, 18 February 1976. In this article Wilfred claimed that years later the correspondent concerned, Ed Hymoff, visited him in Phnom Penh and Peking, and confirmed that the CIA had been behind the offer.

attack. Steve Dunleavy was one of Murdoch's more ruthless reporters.[40] Reared amongst the 'rough-and-tumble' of Sydney's tabloids, Dunleavy had since established a reputation as a hard liver and an unscrupulous reporter, with a flair for sensationalist yarns. Wilfred was dining at a New York restaurant with Urizen Books' Michael Roloff, when Dunleavy attempted to "molest" them, whilst his photographer shouted, "traitor." According to Wilfred's account, the police were summoned and Dunleavy, on Roloff's initiative, was booked for "harassment [and] disorderly conduct." Shortly afterwards, Wilfred wrote to the *Nation Review's* editor, George Munster, and Malcolm Salmon for damaging information that could be used against Dunleavy.[41] Salmon asked around Melbourne and Sydney press circles, and found that colleagues were "reluctant to talk", as "[e]ither they [were] employed by Murdoch, or they reckon[ed] they might be in the future."[42]

At a New York press conference on 30 November Wilfred again refuted the *Post's* claims, and questioned it and Hefferman's professional standards. Still, the attacks continued. In articles on 14 and 28 December Wilfred declared that the attacks had slandered his "reputation and standing as a journalist", and attempted to stifle his opinions on "southern Africa, post-war Vietnam . . . and the building of socialism in newly independent countries."[43] But his and the *Guardian's* were marginal voices, drowned out amongst the din from the tabloids and 'Birchers.'[44] With no means, other than the Guardian, of telling his side of the story, Wilfred once again contemplated legal action to defend his name. With his customary confidence, Wilfred told Munster, "some of the most redoubtable US legal brains assure me I have an impeccable case." Furthermore, Wilfred added, "there [wa]s sufficient indignation about Murdoch in liberal circles to overcome the problem of finding money to succeed."[45]

Meanwhile, the *Guardian's* Steve Manning had commenced investigating the possible sources of the attacks. The secretary of the Republican Congressman, Larry McDonald was Louise Rees who, with her husband, John, were prominent Birchers. Manning discovered that John distributed *International Digest*, a newsletter on the activities of left-wing groups and individuals. In the late 1960s he had also been the editor of the *National Layman's Digest*, "a black-listing publication of the ultra-right Church League of America." According to the League's publicity, its Illinois research establishment contained the "largest and most comprehensive files on subversive activity with the single exception of the FBI", and was "instantly available to every police department and security agent in the country." At the time Karlin was presenting his deposition to Cooper and Traill in Washington

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[40] See Andrew Rule's "The New York Postman", *The Sunday Age*, 9 January 2000. See also Hugh Lunn's *Spies Like Us* for anecdotes about Dunleavy's style of journalism; pp 26-27.
[41] Letter from Wilfred Burchett to George Munster, the Editor, the *Nation Review*, 23 December 1977; Salmon Papers ML.
[42] Letter from Malcolm Salmon to Wilfred Burchett, 16 April 1978; *ibid.*
[43] "Burchett: He Rebuts Right Attacks", the New York *Guardian*, 14 December 1977; & Wilfred Burchett, "Burchett Refutes 'Torturer' Charges", the New York *Guardian*, 28 December 1977.
[44] "Rebuttal Forum: Burchett Smear and Free Speech", 21 December 1977, the New York *Guardian*.
[45] Letter from Wilfred Burchett to George Munster, the Editor, the *Nation Review*, 23 December 1977; Salmon Papers, ML.

DC, Manning alleged that Louise Rees was a staff member of the House Internal Security Sub-committee.[46]

Wilfred and the *Guardian* were determined to pursue the matter in court. The Guardian even launched an appeal to fund the case. It never eventuated. After 25 years, the *Guardian* and Wilfred were about to sever their connection over events in Kampuchea.

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In the 1960s, Wilfred's vision of a burgeoning socialist brotherhood was bolstered by his travels along Vietnam's frontiers. However, by the mid-1970s, squabbles between the brothers had started to tarnish his vision. Another certainty on which Wilfred had built his world was commencing to crumble.

The Khmer Rouge had come to power in Cambodia on 17 April 1975. Coinciding with the falls of Saigon to the VPA, and Vientiane to the Pathet Lao, the liberation of Phnom Penh further substantiated Wilfred and the *Guardian's* progressive view of history. Throughout the following months, both dismissed rumours of famine in Cambodia and internal discontent with the new regime.[47] Without access to the country, there was no evidence - other than murmurs from seemingly disgruntled refugees trudging into neighbouring border areas - to substantiate the rumours. Furthermore, Wilfred and the *Guardian* believed in the moral and political righteousness of the Khmer Rouge's cause, and so were disinclined to countenance criticism of the new regime. Indeed, Wilfred thought the Khmers were developing a model classless society.

On 17 October Wilfred interviewed Sihanouk in Pyongyang. Appointed President in the new regime, Sihanouk assured Wilfred that he was neither a disillusioned nor powerless head of state, as mooted in western press reports, but "proud" of being "a Khmer Rouge by adoption." The Khmers were developing "a classless society, he suggested, "without money or markets", and were "solidly pro-Cambodian." Though "China [was] our greatest friend", he declared, Peking was "in no way our boss." Sihanouk had "explode[d] the myth that Cambodia was a satellite to China", Wilfred later wrote, as well as "the lies and slander" that the new regime "[wa]s falling to pieces."[48] In early 1976 he airily told Winston that with Sihanouk as president, and "another old friend, Ieng Sary, as second vice-president", he was "virtually certain to be the first journalist . . . into Cambodia."[49] The visit did not eventuate, and by mid-year Wilfred was starting to doubt the direction of not only the Kampuchean revolution, but also China's new 'divide and rule' role in South East Asia.

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[46] Steve Manning, "Guild Exposes Right Wing Spy Unit", the New York *Guardian*, 11 January 1978.
[47] See George C Hildenbrand's "US Tried to Starve Cambodia", the New York *Guardian*, 15 October 1975.
[48] Wilfred Burchett, "Sihanouks Views Cambodia's Future", the New York *Guardian*, 12 November 1975. See also Wilfred Burchett, "Cambodia Adopts a New Constitution", the New York *Guardian*, 14 January 1976.
[49] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, Meudon, 16 January 1976; BP SLV.

In early May 1976 Kampuchean forces launched attacks across the Vietnamese border into Tay Ninh province, a territorial out-crop that jutted like a 'parrot's beak' into Kampuchean territory. By 1977 the Khmers had infiltrated into the Mekong Delta, and launched divisional strength raids on Tay Ninh. Later in the year, the Vietnamese commenced a series of counter-attacks, and on 25 December 1978 launched a drive on Phnom Penh.

In late 1978 Wilfred travelled around Tay Ninh's 'Parrot's Beak.' Refugees were flooding into the province from Kampuchea, telling horrific tales of life under the Khmer Rouge. Previously, such tales had been dismissed by the left, as disgruntled outbursts from reactionaries and those dispossessed by the revolution. Thus, John Barron and Anthony Paul's *Murder in a Gentle Land*, and Francois Ponchaud's *Cambodia: Year Zero*, which painted grimmer pictures of the revolution, had been slighted as anti-communist propaganda by western leftists.[50] However, by 1978 the refugees' stories could no longer be discounted. In a Tay Ninh refugee camp Wilfred met Madame Nuth Thi. She had been a family friend of the Burchetts in Phnom Penh, and now told Wilfred of the famine, the killing of intellectuals, the destruction of books, and the assault on family life under the Khmer Rouge. Her story, and others in the camp, challenged Wilfred's moral world.[51] The cause for which he had dedicated his life had lapsed into savagery. Human considerations had been displaced by a mad Marxist-Maoist quest for ideological purity.

Wilfred also travelled to Vietnam's border with China, which was tense and closed. Shortly after he left, Vietnamese forces entered Cambodia, and by early January 1979 had secured seven of the country's provinces east of the Mekong. Within a month the Vietnamese had pushed the Khmer Rouge into the malarial forests along the Thai-Cambodian border, and installed a puppet regime under Heng Samrin in Phnom Penh. On 17 February Chinese troops, in support of the Pol Pot regime, crossed into northern Vietnam. To Wilfred, the motivations behind both attacks were poles apart. The Chinese, mindful of a powerful Vietnamese-brokered Indo-Chinese brotherhood, sought to circumvent the possibility through 'divide and rule' strategies. In contrast, the Vietnamese, fortified by Ho's legacy, fought to bolster the brotherhood. Hence, Wilfred interpreted the Vietnamese attack as an act of liberation against expansionist Chinese designs. It had stemmed, he added, from the Vietnamese and Cambodian's "common history of co-operation resisting foreign domination."[52] Once again, Wilfred contended, Peking had forgotten Chou's national liberationist legacy.

The conflict had also tested Wilfred's ties with the New York *Guardian*. Since the commencement of border hostilities between the Vietnamese and Kampucheans, the paper, though concerned, had been loathed to take sides. Whilst Wilfred increasingly considered the Khmer Rouge

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[50] See David Chandler's *Brother Number One: The Political Biography of Pol Pot*, pp 167-168; & Robert Manne's essay, "Pol Pot and the Intellectuals", in *The Shadow of 1917: Cold War Conflict in Australia*.
[51] Wilfred Burrchett, *At the Barricades*, pp 5-7.
[52] Wilfred Burchett, *The Cambodia, Vietnam, China Triangle*, p 232.

"proxies" for China's regional ambitions, the *Guardian* was disinclined to countenance such views.[53] Indeed, it argued that the scenario, along with the frequently touted counter-line that the Vietnamese were Soviet "proxies", was "a slander on the history of these heroic [Indo-Chiunese] peoples and a crude attempt to revive the discredited anticommunist myths of yerteryear."[54] When, in January 1979, the *Guardian* condemned Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea, Wilfred cut his ties with the paper after 25 years. The cornerstone of his professional life was gone.[55]

In May Wilfred returned to Phnom Penh. It was a "depressing" journey. He was immediately struck by "the great abandonment of cultivatable land", the "emaciated" people and their "tragic faces", and the stories "of suffering unprecedented in our times."[56] The stories edged the darker extremities of left-wing thought; its "infantile naivete" in allowing ideology to crush humanism and stop history's progressive clock.[57] He traced the Khmer Rouge's rise to Sihanouk's suppression of Pracheachon - or leftist People's Party - in the mid-1960s. It had created a vacuum on the Cambodian left, Wilfred stated, which the predominantly Paris educated, theoretically self-indulgent Saloth Sar, Ieng Sary and Khieu Samphan filled. They had no roots within Cambodian society, Wilfred contended, and so failed to develop "realistic policies based on the concrete objective situation." Instead, they brutally imposed their theoretical will on the people. Dissenters and individualists were eliminated, wrote Wilfred. Feelings of "friendship and pity or giving a helping hand to those in distress were [considered] the stigmata of individualist tendencies", or "a sign of a bourgeois past", and so were stifled. So too were familial sentiments, as well as "humanist culture, education, religion, philosophy and morality." The people, Wilfred later wrote, were "reduced . . . to slaves", controlled by "terror, brutality and genocide." Of the substantial circle of friends Wilfred had in Cambodia, all were dead, except for "the half-a-dozen" who had joined the Khmer Rouge.[58]

Wilfred also noted that the Khmer Rouge had falsified Indo-Chinese history. Cambodia's debt to Ho and the VPA, who had shouldered the independence struggle against the French, had been expunged. As Wilfred explained, of the 54 combat battalions that the French had in Indo-China, 50 were engaged in Vietnam, and all bar 10 were located in the North. Thus, he argued, Cambodian and Laotian independence had been won on the backs of the Viet Minh, in a campaign forged on revolutionary solidarity and brotherhood. The Khmer Rouge, Wilfred added, with their notions of the "racially pure 'Khmer'", had masked this past with myths of Khmer-Vietnamese hostility.[59]

With the brotherhood's disintegration, Wilfred also began to re-think China's past. No longer was it a paragon of national liberationist virtue, but a sly manipulator of power politics. During Wilfred's visit to Vietnam, Pham van Dong related that Chou, at the 1954 Geneva Conference, had

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[53] See *ibid*, p 149.
[54] The New York *Guardian*, "*Guardian* Viewpoint - Vietnam-Kampuchea Conflict", 25 January 1978.
[55] Wilfred Burchett, *At the Barricades*, p 13.
[56] Wilfred Burchett, *The Cambodia, Vietnam, China Triangle*, p 180.
[57] *Ibid*, pp 210-211; & *Southern Africa Stands Up*, p 118.
[58] *Ibid*, pp 55, 119, 129, 111, 93 & 3.
[59] *Ibid*, pp 21, 16, 58 & 91.

sought to keep Vietnam divided and weak, and America off China's doorstep. Chou, Pham recounted, wanted to establish "tributary states" in South East Asia, and "couldn't care less about the[ir] socialist content . . . or the fate of their revolutionary forces." The comment jolted Wilfred, who remembered China's reticence about a peace settlement in Paris, and the Peking press's criticism of his 1967 interview with Trinh. He was starting to perceive another, more sinister side of the story. China, he now argued, had continually connived to keep Vietnam divided and weakened through machinations "totally divorced from any notion of proletarian internationalism or solidarity."[60] Chou, whom Wilfred once considered an internationalist *par excellence*, was now cast as a sly double-dealer. Another constant had been removed from Wilfred's life. Only, Vietnam remained true to the revolutionary legacy.

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On 7 April 1975 Russell Spurr had flown into Saigon to cover the death throes of the South Vietnamese Government. On arrival, he was "given a good old grilling" by the authorities, during which he was asked if he had testified in support of Burchett at the Kane trial. Spurr admitted that he had, and was branded an "enemy of the [South Vietnamese] state" and deported. He told Wilfred of the incident, but wanted it kept quiet. Airing it, Spurr thought, could compromise the *Far Eastern Economic Review's* Saigon correspondent, who was "already being harassed by the secret police."[61] Wilfred reassured Spurr that, with the fall of Saigon, "we will be back in business again."[62] However, Wilfred's hopes would be dashed.

In late June Wilfred arrived in Vientiane. He noted to Winston that he was "terribly please[d] to be back in South East Asia, meeting old friends of the jungle from 20 years ago, who [were] now . . . in power." He expected to be "in these parts quite a while."[63] Yet, by mid-July, he was in Hong Kong, staying with Spurr. The Vietnamese Government had denied him entry to Hanoi. Spurr wrote to the Hanoi-based Salmon, explaining that Wilfred was "no longer *persona grata* with the DRV." Salmon inquired at the Foreign Ministry on Wilfred's behalf. The Ministry advised "that all hotel rooms in the city were full." As Salmon was residing in the near empty Thong Nhat Hotel, he knew this was nonsense.[64] Later, an unknown source confided to Spurr that Wilfred was "out of favour because he shook hands with Nixon" during the latter's 1972 visit to China.[65] He had also lost his usefulness to the Vietnamese. Though the ban was subsequently lifted, Wilfred was never afforded an explanation.[66]

Nonetheless, the incident did not dampen Wilfred's enthusiasm for the country, its people and their war. Not many publishers, however, shared his enthusiasm. By mid-January 1976, Wilfred had

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[60] *Ibid*, pp 36, 178 & 38.
[61] Letter from Russell Spurr, the Foreign Editor, the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, to Malcolm Salmon, 7 April 1975; Salmon Papers, ML
[62] Letter from Wilfred Burchett to Russell Spurr, Meudon, 30 May 1975; *ibid.*
[63] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary Burchett, Vientiane, 8 July 1975; BP SLV.
[64] Letter from Malcolm Salmon to Wilfred Burchett, undated; Salmon Papers, ML
[65] Letter from Russell Spurr to Malcolm Salmon, 23 August 1975; *ibid.*
[66] Letter from Wilfred Burchett to Malcolm Salmon, 7 October 1977; *ibid.*

completed *Grasshoppers & Elephants*. Written in a 16-day burst, it chronicled the final stages of the Vietnam War and the fall of Saigon from information gleaned during his recent visit.[67] The manuscript was originally offered to Pantheon, but was rejected. Though the publishing editor, Jim Peck, had found it "enjoyable to read", Pantheon's accountants considered it not commercially viable. Penguin's London editor, Neil Middleton, was another enthusiastic reader, but also lamented that his company's accountants were against publication. West German publishers, too, rejected the manuscript, though their Norwegian, French, Portuguese and Eastern bloc colleagues accepted it. Angrily, Wilfred noted to Winston, "the USA and its most faithful allies want to forget th[e] unpleasant fact" that they had lost the war.[68]

But Vietnam had become a personal quest for Wilfred, beyond the concerns of publishers or their accountants. By June he was writing a companion to *Grasshoppers*, intended to place the war within the context of Vietnam's history. *Catapult to Freedom* was to be Wilfred's tribute to Vietnamese resilience. Throughout the ages, he noted, they had stubbornly sunk roots into the soil, and defended it from flood and invasion. Ho and Giap were the proud inheritors of this legacy, and in thwarting better-armed French and US troops, had drawn on centuries of "accumulated experience."[69] Unlike others members of the revolutionary brotherhood, the Vietnamese had remained true to their past.

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In August 1977 Wilfred signed a contract with Macmillan to write his memoirs. The contract stipulated that the work was to be completed by February 1978. As the copyright of *Passport* had reverted to Wilfred, he envisaged few problems. He would lift material from it, and pad it with additional anecdotes to bolster his story. By October he was pondering titles and, briefly, "Memoirs of a Heretic" appealed. He was also considering suitable colleagues to pen the 'Foreword.' Graham Greene had been invited, but declined. "[H]e was off to do a novel based on Panama where he expected to meet up with numerous old CIA acquaintances", Wilfred explained to Winston. The London-based Australian journalist, Philip Knightley, was another possibility. They had become friends, and Knightley, in his history of war correspondents, *The First Casualty*, had graciously acknowledged Wilfred's work.[70] Harrison Salisbury would finally get the job, and fittingly placed Wilfred alongside the great radical American journalists, John Reed and Lincoln Steffens.[71] But *At the Barricades* turned out to be a disappointing read; too much of the pioneering journalist and not enough of the man, and his trials and tribulations. *Barricades* did not mention Krotkov, Kane and the Sydney trial. Instead, it recounted Wilfred's achievements, not his failures or so-called treacheries.

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[67] Letter from Wilfred to Winston & Mary, Meudon, 16 January 1976; BP SLV.
[68] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett Meudon 13 April 1976; BP SLV.
[69] Wilfred Burchett, *Catapult to Freedom*, p 25.
[70] Letter from Wilfred to Winston Burchett, 2 August 1977; BP SLV.
[71] Harrison Salisbury's "Foreword" in *At the Barricades*, p vi.

While Wilfred was piecing together his memoir, Joseph Needham had commenced corresponding with the former editor of the *Shanghai Monthly Review*, John W Powell. He, too, believed that the US Air Force had conducted germ warfare missions in Korea, and had said so in the *Review*. On his return to the US in 1954, he had been summoned to appear before the US Senate Sub-committee on Internal Security, where he was confronted by testimonies from the recanting germ warfare confessors. In April 1955, Powell, his wife, Sylvia, and associate, Julian Schuman, were indicted to appear before the grand jury on charges of sedition. Though Powell was financially crippled after the collapse of the *Review*, the American Council for Civil Liberties had backed his case, viewing it as a freedom of speech issue. To support his defence, Powell began subpoenaing files on Korea, relating to the treatment of Communist prisoners-of-war. He was subsequently advised that the Army would not honour his subpoena, because the files revealed that prison camp authorities had generally mistreated the prisoners - including the shooting and bayoneting of them - and that the "public release" of such information would prove "embarrassing."[72] The first trial was aborted in January 1959, after the press had misreported the judge's comments, and though a new complaint was issued in May 1961, it was dismissed.[73]

In the mid-1970s, Powell used the US *Freedom of Information Act* to secure access to files on the US bacteriological warfare program. To his horror, Powell found that the US Army had tested biological agents in several American cities between 1950 and 1966. A test in San Francisco had left 11 people hospitalised, of whom one died. Powell also claimed that the military had conducted biological experiments on psychiatric patients at St Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington DC. Apparently, 81 patients were infected with unspecified contaminants, of whom 13 died. He also discovered that Fort Detrick had a "testing contract" with the Philadelphia hospital to which the Legion Convention members were taken during the initial out-break of Legionnaires' Disease in 1976. A source had apparently confirmed to Powell that the bacteria were the same as used during the St Elizabeth's experiment.[74]

But Powell was particularly after information concerning the Korean War. He did learn that the Pine Bluff Arsenal had produced a new germ bomb similar to those allegedly dropped on the Chinese during the War. Furthermore, Powell discovered that in the spring of 1952, the Defense Department had issued instructions to increase the production of germ warfare clusters. As Powell ruefully explained to Needham, all this was being done while the American Government was denying the charge, "and produ[ing] experts who declared that such a weapon was technically not feasible."[75] *At the Barricades* would have been so much better if Wilfred had been aware of Powell's findings.

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[72] Letter from John Powell to Mr Terry, 16 December 1977; folder 37, Needham Papers IWM.
[73] See Williams, Peter & Wallace, David, *Unit 731: The Japanese Army's Secret of Secrets*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1989, pp 257-2267.
[74] Letter from John & Sylvia Powell to Professor Joseph Needham, San Francisco, 9 June 1977; folder 37, Needham Papers IWM.

By 1981 Ronald Reagan was in the White House, and Wilfred and Vessa had retreated to Bulgaria, to escape the expense of French medical care.[76] With Reagan's talk of evil Soviets and 'Star Wars', the Cold War suddenly had an extra nip. In response, a new peace movement took to American, European and Australian streets each Palm Sunday and on the August anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing. The movement prompted Wilfred to again tell his side of the Hiroshima story. As "the threat of nuclear war [was] . . . the central issue of our time", he considered "it . . . [his] clear duty, based on [his] special experiences to add . . . to our collective memory and consciousness."[77]

Shadows of Hiroshima told the stories of the bomb's victims. Their voices had been choked by US military authorities, amidst an "accumulation of lies, half-truths and manipulated public opinion." Wilfred correctly argued that the military's account had concentrated "only on the enormous destructive power of the Bomb against material objects, while attempting to cover-up what it did to human beings."[78] The Japanese story had been deliberately muzzled, because it contained "the existence of a will to genocide [and] absolute destruction." *Shadows* sought to redress this amoral amnesia, and plot the heroic rise of the bomb's victims to become "the most stalwart and militant *peaceniks*."[79] In telling their story, Wilfred, as the first journalist into Hiroshima, claimed his place as the pioneer of this new peace movement. He never lived to see his claim honoured.

But he did live to settle his differences with the *Guardian*. On 5 January 1983, the paper admitted that its position on Cambodia was wrong. "[A] great deal of information ha[d] become available about the criminal nature of the 'socialism' practiced by the Pol Pot regime and the extent of its provocative actions and intransigence prior to the Vietnamese invasion", declared the *Guardian's* editorialist. Hence, a Vietnamese-backed occupation was preferable to Sihanouk's Khmer Rouge. The admission prompted Wilfred to reconsider his position. Throughout his estrangement, he had "never lost [his] conviction that the *Guardian* [wa]s by far the best paper on the left in the US." So, he had no reservations about writing again for the paper, once its position on Cambodia had altered. It was a matter of principle.[80]

On 23 February Wilfred's first article appeared. It was on "the anti-communist 'Big Lie' technique", which was being used to bolster anti-Soviet sentiment in the West. Wilfred was concerned about the growing "international network of quasi 'respectable' writers and researchers . . . prepared to go to extraordinary lengths in [their] attempts to portray non-capitalist countries as the source of all the world's evils." By lies and innuendo, the "network" engendered "hysteria and hatred which c[olud] be manipulated by their politician cohorts." Wilfred might have been writing of his own life, and the

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[75] *Ibid.*
[76] Conversation with Philip Knightley, 5 July 1999.
[77] Wilfred Burchett, *Shadows of Hiroshima*, pp 9-10.
[78] *Ibid*, pp 9 & 13.
[79] *Ibid*, pp 119-120.
[80] "War in Kampuchea: A Reappraisal", the New York *Guardian*, 5 January 1983. Wilfred's commentt was cited in "A Life Committed to the People's Cause" by Abe Weisburg, the New York *Guardian*, 12 October 1983.

officially sanctioned lies and innuendoes used to tarnish his character.[81] It was one of his last articles for the *Guardian*.

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Rainer never considered his father an alcoholic. He simply did not think about it. His father drank often and heavily, but it did not seem to affect him. Maybe it helped him momentarily forget the job and its more haunting memories. He drove his car under the influence of drink, and once when pulled over by French police for a breath test, placed his tongue across the mouthpiece, feigning that he was blowing, when actually he was obstructing. Bluffed, the French police waved him on. But Wilfred could not bluff time. By 1983 he was slowing down, and perhaps the drink had something to with it.

Rainer remembered that in mid-1983, his father came to London to meet publishers and visit the dentist. Afterwards, he became ill. On 27 September Rainer was conducting computer classes in London, when he was called to the phone. A journalist wanted him to know that his father had just died in Bulgaria. He wanted to afford Rainer a moment's private grief before the public debate over his father's body and soul began. It was a simple, moving tribute. Perhaps - in that brief moment - there was a brotherhood after all.

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On a Tuesday morning in mid-November, a select group gathered in the Grand Committee Meeting Room at the House of Commons to pay tribute to Wilfred. His friend James Cameron spoke. He considered Wilfred probably "the most travelled and committed correspondent of our generation."[82] So too did the editor of the Communist *Morning Star*, Sam Russell, and John Pilger. Pilger was a chip off Wilfred's block; a humanist, not afraid to speak his mind, and with an acute moral sense of injustice. Cambodia had drawn them together. Pilger remembered Wilfred's impassioned but ill-fated plea for aid to Cambodia in July 1979, to an all-party meeting of the House of Commons. He also remembered Wilfred's warning, the following June, that Pilger was a Khmer Rouge target.[83] Like Wilfred, Pilger's tendency to preach prickled his more objective colleagues. They saw journalism as a job. Pilger, like Wilfred, considered it a calling. Wilfred, Pilger noted, "did not believe that objectivity was holy grail . . . but only a means to the truth."[84] Also in the Commons was the Vietnamese Ambassador to Britain, Kiem Bui, who spoke of Burchett's "noble feelings for our just cause." According to Kiem: "No words, no threat nor smear, no sum of money could intimidate him to change sides." No greater tribute could have been offered to Wilfred.[85] It would have brought a smile to his face. Still, the other Burchett lived on . . .

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[81] Wilfred Burchett, "The Real Meaning of the Pope Plot", 23 February 1983, the New York *Guardian*, 23 February 1983.
[82] See James Cameron, "An Old China Plate", the London *Morning Star*, 23 June 1981.
[83] John Pilger, *Heroes*, pp 339-400 & 428.
[84] John Pilger, "An Innocent Abroad", the London *Morning Star*, 28 September 1983.
[85] "Ambassador Salutes Wilfred Burchett", the London *Morning Star*, 24 November 1983.

Conclusion

In early May 2000 the author mentioned to the Melbourne *Age's* Paul Robinson that Burchett had assisted the US Ambassador-at-Large, Averrell Harriman, in attempting to secure the release of American prisoners-of-war detained in North Vietnam during 1966 and 1967. Given the popularly held contention that Burchett was a traitor, Robinson and the paper's editor, Michael Gawenda, recognised the story's potential and subsequently ran it on the front page.[1] Within a week, Burchett's friends and colleagues, Philip Knightly and John Pilger, had written to the *Age* stating that the article "should put to rest the years of lies and disinformation about Burchett."[2]

The article riled the Melbourne journalist, Roland Perry. In 1988 Perry had published a biography of Burchett, *The Exile: Burchett a Reporter of Conflict*. Claiming to be based on files from Australian, British, French, Soviet, Bulgarian and American intelligence agencies, as well as material from the Burchett Papers housed in Melbourne's La Trobe Library, Perry told the security side of the Burchett story - without a single footnote.[3] Perry was certainly not one to let the 'official' facts get in the way of a good read. In referring to Burchett's meeting with the London *Daily Mail's* Lachie McDonald at Operation Little Switch in April 1952, Perry alleged Burchett told McDonald:

> You're just like Denis Warner. You tell Warner, I've been watching his stuff about me. Some day I'll get him.[4]

As previously mentioned, McDonald's statement to ASIO in 1953 merely noted that "[Burchett] had seen an article 'on him' by Denis Warner, and would see him some day."[5] Though tense, McDonald's account contained none of the malicious tone evident in Perry's version. Perry either received his information from another source or misread the ASIO files; or perhaps he was too intent on portraying Burchett as a traitor in his snappily paced biography. At the time of *The Exile's* publication, Perry was collaborating with the Australian film director, Tim Burstall, on a screen adaptation of the traitorous Burchett's life.[6] Though the film did not eventuate, perhaps the mere thought of it clouded Perry's reading of ASIO's material. A traitorous rather than a victimised Burchett unquestionably was the more attractive cinematic proposition. Notwithstanding this, *The Exile* brought to the traitorous life a narrative structure, which seemingly bolstered the more scholarly claims of Robert Manne's 1985 essay, "He Chose Stalin."[7]

Therefore, it was not unexpected to find Perry intemperately attacking the assertions that Burchett had assisted the Americans in Vietnam. Under the headline, "Burchett through David Irving glasses", Perry dismissed the story as gross revisionism which put "a terrific fictional slant" on

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[1] Paul Robinson, "Traitor Burchett Worked for the Americans", the Melbourne *Age*, 6 May 2000.
[2] Letter-to-the Editor from Philip Knightly and John Pilger, the Melbourne *Age*, 13 May 2000.
[3] Roland Perry, *Burchett; A Reporter of Conflict*, p xi.
[4] *Ibid*, p 119.
[5] Statement by John Ferguson McDonald, Singapore, 28 October 1953, NAA6119/XR1, item 15, folios 184-185.
[6] Roland Perry, *op cit*, p xi.
[7] Robert Manne, "He Chose Stalin: The Case of Wilfred Burchett." See the Introduction.

Burchett's life. Perry reminded *Age* readers that Burchett had used and abused UN prisoners-of-war in Korea to concoct the germ warfare story, and had later attempted to "ingratiate himself" with the KGB. The "real story", he added, was in the recant of the germ warfare confessor, Paul Kuiss, and the papers of the noted correspondent and Burchett critic, Denis Warner.[8]

In 1997 Warner completed the second volume of his memoir, *Not Always on Horseback*. It, like Jack Kane's 1989 memoir, *Exploding the Myths*, was a valuable contribution to the debate over Burchett's reputation. As expected, both contended Burchett was a traitor. More importantly, however, both revealed the concerted campaign by Australian conservative politicians, and the country's mainstream media, military and security establishments to destroy Burchett's reputation. In a telling aside, Warner entitled his concluding chapter, "Beyond the Barricades." It was a curious play on the title of Burchett's 1978 memoir, *At the Barricades*, and an indication of the personal rivalry that riddled their relationship. In moving "[b]eyond" Burchett's barricades, Warner was staking his claim for the last word on Wilfred's life.[9] Like Perry, he too considered Burchett a traitor.

But the tag was far too dismissive of Wilfred's considerable accomplishments and the complexities of treachery. Warner was - and still is - a forthright anti-communist who predominantly reported the military establishment's line in Vietnam and Korea. Burchett, in contrast, covered the communist side of the story, placing him at odds with Warner, and leaving him susceptible to charges of treason from the establishment. As with 'agent of influence', the term 'traitor' - when legally untested - can be loosely touted to taint reputations rather than substantiate guilt. In Burchett's case, the term masked broader questions about the role of his so-called treacheries. If Burchett had tortured or interrogated prisoners-of-war in Korea on behalf of the Chinese or North Korean military, then he was a traitor, and the Menzies Government was morally obliged to pursue the matter in court, regardless of the political ramifications. In the absence of substantial evidence, however, the Government decided against such action. If the role of a journalist is to report the truth as he sees it, then Burchett was not a traitor to his craft, country or conscience. Undoubtedly, he crafted his stories to further the cause of decolonisation. As he noted in *Passport*, his role was not simply to "record history, but to help shape it in the right direction."[10] Thus, his words were weapons honed against American Cold War policies in Asia. This was Burchett's crime, not the vacuous charges that he was a communist propagandist or interrogated prisoners-of-war in Korea. His life, and the one concocted for him, demarcated the limits of legitimate dissent in Menzies' Australia.

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By nature, the real Wilfred was a traveller who wrote and certainly not a traitor. Indeed, as this biography contends, he was one of Australia's great travellers, traversing countless divides for his stories. He loved the romance of the road and the jungle track. Thus, his more memorable stories were

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[8] Roland Perry, "Burchett through David Irving glasses", the Melbourne *Age*, 15 May 2000.
[9] Denis Warner, *Not Always on Horseback; An Australian Correspondent at War and Peace in Asia*, p 235.
[10] Wilfred Burchett, *Passport*, p viii.

not about political intrigues, but involved journeys to places where few of his colleagues had ventured before. His train trip to Hiroshima, and treks through NFL-controlled South Vietnam, showed Burchett at his traveller and journalistic best. Perhaps his yen for divides and battle-fronts stemmed from the inequities he had witnessed during the Depression. All were equal on Wilfred's fronts, regardless of class and education. His fronts also tested one's mettle. Human values like wit, courage and honour were prized and rewarded. Being a chip off Caleb's block, Wilfred repeatedly returned to the front. Perhaps he still heard whispers from his cursed samphan wallah on the Arakan front, though more than likely, he was simply proving himself worthy of Caleb's heritage.

Frontier types, however, are often afflicted with a progressive view of history. Their role is to improve upon the legacy of their forebears for future generations. The notion appealed to Wilfred. He believed in human progress, albeit with a left-wing slant, but he was not a communist ideologue. Though he flirted with Stalinism in the post-war years, Wilfred was more of a romantic revolutionary, in the John Reed mould, attracted to the human struggle, not the theoretical aspects of the cause. This, of course, had its pitfalls. Wilfred was too inclined to write the rosier side of his revolutions. His work tended to lapse into woodenly worded parables about good Asian peasants stoically defending their lands and families from evil Americans. But as Wilfred's prolific output suggests, he wrote with ridiculous haste and little time for introspection, and so often lapsed into saints and sinners' stereotypes. He also wrote with an acute moral purpose, which suited his stereotypical view. He told the people's side of the story, which was too often ignored in the western press, and more often than not he got it right. Vietnam was Wilfred's crowning achievement, with his constant line that the Americans were fighting an unwinnable war. Nonetheless, he was too uncritical of his own side's sins with its show trials, purges and concentration camps. They were absent from Wilfred's writings, until Pol Pot's Cambodia challenged his beliefs. Before then, Wilfred was too blinkered by the moral certainty that he was reporting the right side of history to delve into the darker side of his cause. It was the one divide that Wilfred rarely crossed.

As Australian National Archives releases more material under the thirty-year ruling, further information will be revealed about Burchett's life. Hence, this thesis will not be the last word on Wilfred, but it is for the time being the most comprehensive work. It establishes there were two Burchetts: the journalist, and the Menzies Government's traitor and communist propagandist. Whilst the journalist wrote the truth as he saw it to further his cause, the traitor was used by successive Liberal administrations to discredit his views and justify the denial of Burchett's rights as an Australian citizen. This thesis supports McCormack and Carey's views that Burchett was victimised because his opinions disagreed with Liberal foreign policy. Future scholars should be mindful of the split Burchett persona. To uncritically write on Burchett's life from Australian Government files, as Manne and Perry have done, is to grossly misrepresent Wilfred and his work. Indeed, such works simplistically continued the propaganda war waged by the Menzies, Holt and Gorton governments against Burchett.

Wilfred's life was a combination of triumph and tragedy. His strength in one situation often proved his downfall in another. His fearlessness, which had brought him fame at the front, proved his undoing in court, where he failed to adequately evaluate the danger in suing Jack Kane. But Wilfred had immense resolve. He was one of last century's great survivors; and on his day, a journalist without peer and true to Caleb's heritage. No greater tribute can be paid to him.

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