

**THE EVOLUTION OF  
AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN  
POLICY 1938-1965,  
by Alan Watt.  
Cambridge University Press,  
387 pp, \$9.35.**

THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD is widely recognised as the turning point of the Second World War in Europe. That it was also the turning point of the war in Asia and the Pacific isn't so widely believed, but it is the only inference to be drawn from a passage in Sir Alan Watt's new book on Australian foreign policy.

He quotes Japanese author Toshikazu Kase's report that "when the news of the surrender of the German army at Stalingrad reached Tokyo on January 31, 1943, a conference was held at the Japanese foreign office to study the European situation." The majority of government leaders agreed that there was now little chance of an Axis victory and "consequently Japan must reorientate her policy before Germany collapsed." Prince Konoye, Marquis Kido and other leaders began moves towards peace. "Bitter fighting in the war with Japan still lay ahead," writes Sir Alan Watt, "but the fear of actual invasion of Australia by a ruthless enemy was lifted."

That Soviet actions and policies can powerfully affect Australian security even today does not seem to have made much impression on Sir Alan Watt because he says nothing more about it and in a book devoted to the evolution of Australian foreign policy, 1938-65, gives only a passing glance at Australia's relations with one of the world's two super powers. He does not mention the rupture of 1954, the renewal of contacts in 1959 or the trade treaty of 1965.

He is content to repeat, without question or analysis, the main stock phrases of the cold war mythology, resolutely shutting his eyes to the volumes of evidence presented by Professor D. F. Fleming, Professor P. M. S. Blackett, Mr. David Horowitz (in his newly-published Penguin *From Yalta to Vietnam*) and other writers that "Stalin" did *not*, after all, start the cold war.

This is a pity because Sir Alan, having retired from the post of head of the External Affairs Department, is no longer officially required to believe what his governmental superiors were saying and the book shows that he doesn't believe quite a lot of it.

Sir Alan begins, in fact, with an exposure of the Munich Pact of 1938.

The contention of the Left at that time that an alliance of the western powers with the Soviet Union in support of Czechoslovakia could have stopped Hitler without a war is strengthened by Sir Alan's analysis.

If there is one legend of the recent past for which Sir Alan has little respect, it is the infallibility of "Brilliant Bob". In Sir Alan Watt's "afternoon light" Menzies shows up as a blunderer whose conceit and arrogance had a wholly evil effect on Australian foreign policy during the time he dominated it.

His blind support of Sir Anthony Eden in the invasion of Egypt in 1956, his clash with Nehru in 1960 and his refusal to join even such a crusted Tory as Harold Macmillan in acknowledging the Afro-Asian "winds of change" are all dealt with.

In one speech, which Watt quotes, Menzies came as close as anyone could these days to justifying the use of force as an instrument of national policy.

Even Lord Casey, it seems, was not reactionary enough to suit Menzies. In 1954 Casey opposed US plans to intervene in Vietnam and, says Watt, "one is tempted to speculate whether a contributing cause of (Casey's retirement as external affairs minister in 1960) was the belief that Australian foreign policy by this time had become too rigid to meet the challenge of a rapidly changing Commonwealth of Nations and world at large."

Still too much the diplomat to call anyone a fool, Sir Alan says that Menzies "could not cast an active, fertile and imaginative mind towards the future." Perhaps his readers will be content to leave it at that.

All the more disappointing is Sir Alan's concluding chapter, called *A Re-Appraisal*, in which he comes out for those very Australian policies which the ultra-reactionary, too rigid, force-loving Sir Robert was most instrumental in framing and imposing on the Australian Government and people.

He barracks for the American war alliance directed against Asian progressives; he recites, with scarcely a glance at the opposition's case, the Johnson-Rusk-McNamara line on Vietnam. Yet he objects to Holt's All the Way statement and says Australia must not only have, but appear to have, a foreign policy of its own.

Seeking a solution of the dilemma which he apparently recognises, Sir Alan claims that "foreign policy is plural not singular. A country has many objectives and it is usually possible to pursue several of these at the one time." His contention, in line with this, that Australia can have "both friendly relations with Asia as well as an alliance including the United States" is unconvincing in the

context of today. Can anyone really think that a few Colombo Plan crumbs for the "good" Asians will undo the effect of all the bombs on the "bad" ones?

Sir Alan notes that as long ago as 1937 the Australian Prime Minister, J. A. Lyons, proposed a Pacific security pact to include the U.S., the USSR, China and Japan, as well as others. His readers may be inclined to think that what has happened to Australian foreign policy, mainly under Menzies' influence, since then has been not "evolution" but regression.

W. A. WOOD

**THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF WILLIAM BUCKLEY, by John Morgan, Ed. by C. E. Sayers, Sketches by J. H. Wedge, Heineman, 116 pp, \$4.50.**

MOST PEOPLE will vaguely recall from school history books the story of the wild white man who burst into Batman's camp on Port Phillip in 1835 with a cry of "Don't shoot, I'm a British object!" Some may associate this wild white man with the proverbial phrase "Buckley's chance". Very few will know that Buckley dictated his memoirs to John Morgan, a Vandemonian journalist, or that these were ever printed. Well, here are the memoirs, and they are fascinating.

William Buckley was born in Cheshire in 1780, served in the infantry in the Netherlands, and while on furlough was arrested on a charge of receiving stolen goods, and transported. He was selected to go with Lt. Col. Collins' party in the first abortive attempt in 1803 to found a settlement on Port Phillip. He absconded, and fell in with Aborigines who, instead of spearing him, adopted him. He lived