

## R E V I E W

## After Ron and Mikhail

Stuart McMillan, **Neither Confirm Nor Deny: The nuclear ships dispute between New Zealand and the United States**, Allen & Unwin, 1987, \$19.95 pb.

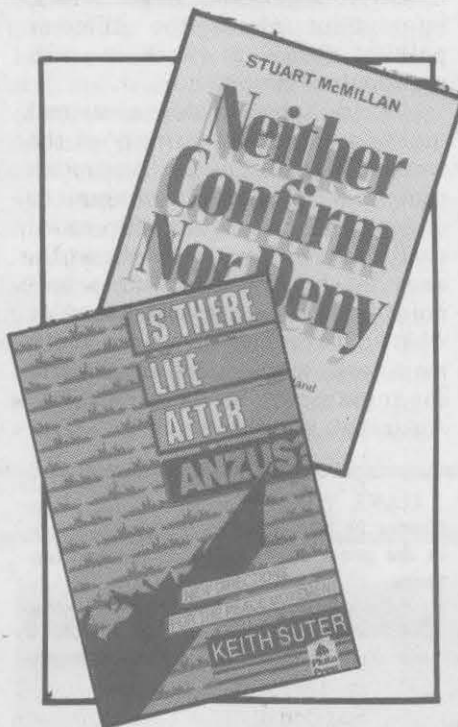
Keith Suter, **Is There Life After ANZUS? New directions for the peace movement**, Pluto Press, 1987, \$9.95 pb.

Reviewed by Dave Worth.

Both of these books are about ANZUS: in particular, about the separate but similar relationship of Australia and New Zealand to the Tammany Hall mayor of the western alliance — the USA. The central difference between the two books is that McMillan narrows his focus to the nuclear ships issue while Suter paints a broader picture of ANZUS's value in relation to Australia's security.

The significance of these two books has been enhanced now that the USA and the USSR have signed the INF Treaty. With plans under way to draft a new treaty to lower the superpowers' strategic nuclear arsenals by 50% or more, the historical value of McMillan's book and the forward-looking nature of Suter's make them a thought-provoking, and hence valuable, read.

The strength and enthusiasm of the Australian peace movement has been on the slide since the middle of 1986. The printed media's coverage of the events around the signing of the INF Treaty gives an indication of what is to come. Unless the peace movement is more outspoken, or publishes more books such as



McMillan's, then the writers of today's history will project a distorted image. They will record the role played by Reagan and Gorbachev in establishing a new relationship between the USA and the USSR, but not the more vital part played by the millions of ordinary people around the world who participated in thousands of peace organisations.

Readers in the future should understand that these were the people who created the political climate that allowed the two leaders successfully to complete an about-turn that would have been though unbelievable less than two years ago.

While Keith Suter has long participated actively in the Australian peace movement, Stuart McMillan is a specialist writer on international and strategic affairs for Christchurch's morning paper. What

makes his detailed description of the banning of nuclear warships from New Zealand by the Lange government stand out is that he obviously has contacts both within the NZ Labour Party and the US Embassy.

He has written a balanced book in that he has outlined the positions taken by all of the protagonists and tried to describe why they hold them. In a very indirect English way, he makes it clear that those parties which don't come out of this affair in good light are the distant US Administration (especially some sections in the State Department) and to a lesser extent, the Australian government.

Australia gets good marks for the way that it handled the conflict between its two ANZUS partners (alliance management, it's called). It helped salvage its alliance with the US but undermined its more important relations with its near neighbour, New Zealand.

The supreme irony in reading this story is that now the INF Treaty allows Russian inspectors onto American soil and that of its allies (West Germany and the UK) to confirm that nuclear weapons are not being stored there. However, the US still refuses publicly to "confirm or deny" to its allies the presence of nuclear weapons on its warships which regularly enter our harbours.

Keith Suter's small but powerful book is necessary reading for anyone interested in the Australian peace movement and questions of sovereignty. He clearly outlines the background to the ANZUS Treaty and its interpretation by various political groupings. And his writing is couched in terms that help cut through the confusion in the debate over ANZUS and national security.

He looks at whether ANZUS, our relationship to the US and the military equipment we are buying are adding to, or reducing, our national security. A whole chapter looks at what few threats to Australia have been identified by different private and government reports.

It is most appropriate that Senator Jo Vallentine provides the foreword

as she has spent a major part of her time in parliament raising the issue of a 'just' defence for Australia. In a similar vein, Suter spends the last quarter of his book focusing on the 'just' defence issue. He sees many positive challenges raised by the Dibb report in particular.

Some of the suggestions he makes to peace activists are not going to please some of us. For example, he must still be the only person in Australia who believes that all of the US bases in Australia can be internationalised. On the other hand he argues that even though Australia is one of the most secure nations on earth, most of the general public don't believe this. Further, most politicians from the major parties are not willing to be upfront on this issue and state the obvious — that ANZUS is an empty treaty.

Thus his comprehensive political strategy is based on the premise that there is little to be gained by attaching or calling directly for the ending of ANZUS, or by the advocacy of 'armed neutrality'. He believes that "It is first necessary to deal with (person's) fears and then to look at the inadequacy of the 'safety blanket'."

It is certain that there will still be plenty to keep peace activists busy in the next few decades — even if we do see a major new treaty on strategic weapons. Both of these books provide something to help us to go about this task enthusiastically. Stuart McMillan's book provides detail not given in our papers on an important government disarmament initiative. It provides, in particular, information about the different political forces at work in such a difficult situation.

Keith Suter provides some real questions about the priority of the work undertaken by the Australian peace movement. He encourages it to understand more fully the social conditions within which we work, and finishes by suggesting a ten-point action plan that is aimed at what he sees as the peace movement's main task: working for multilateral disarmament and enhancing Australia's national security.

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## Quite Kosher



Simon Blumenfeld, *Jew Boy*, Lawrence & Wishart, \$19.95 paperback. Reviewed by Matthew Harding.

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Simon Blumenfeld's *Jew Boy* first appeared in 1935 and reappears now in a facsimile edition. As Blumenfeld's first novel, it was influential in its time and made it possible for other Jewish writers to have their work published. Most immediately, it is a response to the British capital.

The London of the 1930s is powerfully evoked — a city of contrasts, rich and poor, decadent and austere, a modern day Sodom

and Gomorrah with its "amusement parlours, and stream-lined cars and eight-storey factories". Alec, the central character, is a young Jewish tailor living in the Jewish East End. He belongs to the small, unique community of cafes, libraries, billiard halls, political and musical organisations and education classes which existed between the two world wars.

Simon Blumenfeld and numerous other Jewish writers have acknowledged the inspiration — both political and creative — of this subculture. Alec, too, is a regular at the informal gatherings at Whitechapel Library and the Workers' Circle. They provide him with an ideological perspective on his days at 'the lousy workshop' where he is subject to unrewarding work (both spiritually and financially) and a repressive managerial structure. *Jew Boy* provides unforgettable images of 'the dark, blind, overpowering maw of hard labour'.

The entire novel is seen through Alec's eyes. It traces his 'Odyssey, a painful search for a way of living'. This involves a search for comprehensive social meanings — finally resulting in his decision to join the Communist Party and agitate ('his place was in the ranks'). All aspects of Alec's life come together under a discriminating materialist analysis: the dance-halls he visits, the factory, the filthy East End slums and the wider world he looks out upon.

Everything linked up with economics; even in dance-halls, these swan songs of a decaying civilisation... bread-line songs, steadily getting more and more doleful. Trade is bad, exports have gone to hell, and we're all bankrupt, but there's nothing we can do about it, so let's dance, and cry our eyes out!

*Jew Boy* confronts ethnic and class discrimination, the exploitative conditions in the labour market, 'the disease of Unemployment', the sheer struggle of the working class to survive, and the social demands on young Jewish people to marry early. It's full of hard luck stories, of people with no exit, trapped by vicious circumstances. Women like Olive,