

intervention in Korea raised fears that it would also intervene in Southeast Asia. New Zealand then joined in five power talks about how to deter the Chinese in Southeast Asia. In this light, the Middle East commitment seemed increasingly anachronistic to Holland. As the British planned a Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve in Malaya, New Zealand committed an SAS Squadron (later an infantry battalion) and the airforce squadron was transferred from Cyprus to Singapore. McGibbon considers that the Korean War itself did not lead to the Southeast Asian commitment, but the change in the general strategic situation, caused by China's intervention, did. The great dilemma for New Zealand diplomacy, brought about by the Korean war, was the fear of Anglo-American differences: 'The pursuit of a British-oriented policy within an American-dominated international arena made difficult choices inevitable — unless Anglo-American unity was assured.'

The final merit of this book is its meticulous professionalism. It is extremely well-documented from New Zealand, Australian, British and US archives. The appendices include the texts of seven UN resolutions and lists the contributions to the UN forces, from 21 countries. There are 102 photographs, 8 maps and 20 cartoons, including Gordon Minhinnick from the *New Zealand Herald* and Sid Scales from the *Otago Daily Times*.

This volume is an exemplary vindication of the existence of an Historical Branch charged with the task of producing official histories. It is the first volume of a series covering New Zealand's role in conflicts since the Second World War. Amazingly, the publisher printed only 500 copies so that by the time this review is read it will, no doubt, be out of print. May we hope that this is rectified when the eagerly-awaited second volume, on naval, military and logistic operations of New Zealanders in Korea, is published?

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*Undiplomatic Dialogue: Letters between Carl Berendsen and Alister McIntosh 1943-52.* Edited by Ian McGibbon. Auckland University Press in association with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Auckland, 1993. xx, 305 pp. NZ price: \$29.95.

THE PERIOD 1943-1952 was a critical one in the development of New Zealand's international relations. Accounts of the major issues abound: the final stages of the Second World War, establishing the United Nations and the Commonwealth, the momentous changes in Asia, the Cold War and Korean War, and the conclusion of the ANZUS and Japanese Peace treaties.

To this discussion *Undiplomatic Dialogue* brings the unique perspective of two of New Zealand's key public servants at the time: Carl Berendsen, who represented New Zealand in Canberra and then Washington, and Alister McIntosh, who oversaw the establishment of a professional diplomatic service. Both were knighted for their service to New Zealand.

From their extensive personal correspondence, Ian McGibbon has selected and edited, with considerable skill, less than a quarter of their letters to show something of how they wrestled with the momentous issues of their day, if not of the twentieth century. The letters also provide fascinating insights into the domestic, personal and professional worlds of their time, the early days of New Zealand diplomacy and the characters of each writer. The

result is a book which is hard to put down, from the foreword by Frank Corner, who knew and worked with both Berendsen and McIntosh, through the admirable introduction by McGibbon, to the edited and annotated letters which comprise the great majority of the book.

In these letters Berendsen and McIntosh range from issues of broad principle, such as world order, collective security and the recognition of governments, to matters of detail, such as Berendsen's superannuation, attendance at meetings, and the future of W.B. Sutch. They discuss what should be done and what could be done, from promoting order in the office to order in the world.

Those inclined to the view that New Zealand was essentially a follower when shaping its foreign policy, first of the United Kingdom and then of the United States, should read these edited letters. These two key people, and others round them, were doing their own thinking, and developing a New Zealand perspective, often with a good deal of straight talking as views diverged sharply at times. For example, writing from Washington, Berendsen argued vigorously for a strong line against the Soviet Union and was genuinely concerned at McIntosh's failure to see things rightly and clearly (see 28 July 1947). For his part McIntosh was not convinced that Berendsen has things right, and saw grounds for Russian fears about United States' policy. He also took exception to much in American policy and attitudes (see 19 August 1947).

On most other issues views were less divergent, but make for interesting reading nonetheless, as Berendsen presents his views forcefully and unequivocally, while McIntosh's are more tempered. Churchill's wartime proposals for a regional approach to world order were considered inadequate and unsuitable to global order. The formation of the United Nations had their approval, but not the special positions in the Security Council reserved for the big powers, nor the veto provision.

Relations with Australia ranged from the cordial and co-operative to the irritable and frustrated. The Australians often appeared to be self-centred and self-seeking. The Evatt-Burton period was especially difficult.

There was pessimism over the future of Asia. Berendsen wrote on 14 February 1950, 'I entirely agree with your comment that it is "perfectly ridiculous" to pin our faith in Asia to economic aid', but acknowledged he did not 'know what any of us can do about Asia'. There are doubts about the Dumbarton Oaks plan, prospects of the newly formed Commonwealth, the Japanese Peace Treaty and much more. There is annoyance over many British and US actions and policies.

As predictors of general elections their skills are woefully inadequate, although their observations of the personalities and issues are invariably insightful, as are their comments on their political masters, some of whom they respected deeply. The letters reveal the high regard in which each held the other, and also their genuine friendship. Although Berendsen's junior and clearly more deferential in the first few years, by the end of the period McIntosh did not hesitate to put Berendsen in his place when he had gone too far. McIntosh was suited for the Wellington office while Berendsen was clearly suited for the Washington position.

Any such selection leaves many loose ends, questions and disjunctions. To what extent do other letters reveal they changed their thinking after discussion and reflection? Ian McGibbon's annotations are, for the most part, helpful. A little more commentary would have helped the flow without intruding on the letters.

Overall it is hard to imagine anyone with an interest in New Zealand history, politics, international relations, and sociology failing to find this book fascinating and rewarding.

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