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“In his humiliation justice was denied him”

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**THE CITIZEN’S GUIDE TO THE TACTICS USED IN**

**OPERATION PETROV**

The Australian people were reminded of the 1954 Petrov affair when a government minister, under cover of Parliamentary privilege, recently used information taken from security files to blacken the reputation of an Australian citizen. The crime of the citizen was to disagree with the policy of the political party holding power. An interview, which was reported subsequently in a national newspaper, established that some government members were quite unable to differentiate between a security service functioning as an organ of national protection and a security service functioning as a political ‘pimp’ service for the Liberal Party.

Such attitudes towards the Security Service represent an interesting intellectual survival from one of the darkest periods of Australian politics: the period of the Petrov defection and the Royal Commission. There was no general outcry from the press concerning the recent incident in Parliament. The ethical standards of the Australian newspapers are strictly relative. It was always so. It was particularly so during the period of the Petrov affair.

We dealt with the basic facts of Petrov’s defection and “The Tactics of the Australian Press” in a previous pamphlet. (Pamphlet No.22, first issued 19<sup>th</sup> December 1965). This pamphlet was mailed to every Federal politician and to every member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly. Many more copies were distributed.

A need has now arisen as the result of requests, for a further pamphlet specifically designed to provide:

1. A summary guide to the tactics used by Menzies at the time of the Petrov affair.
2. A documented statement establishing the complicity of the Australian newspapers in a carefully planned fraud perpetrated on the Australian people.

Menzies planned the whole of his Petrov campaign with the thoroughness of a military operation. The following synopsis employs appropriate terminology. The section headed “Operational Report” lists the key statements, which reveal that Menzies worked to a plan.

## OVERALL STRATEGY

There were 4 distinct phases in Operation Petrov. Phases 1, 2 and 3 covered the period from 13<sup>th</sup> April 1954, to 29<sup>th</sup> May 1954 – from Menzies' announcement of Petrov's defection to the day of the 1954 Federal election. These 3 phases were designed to place Menzies in a dominating position by ensuring his re-election, as a result of which he could carry out phase 4.

This last phase – intended as a mopping up operation to extinguish Menzies' political opposition – misfired when unexpected resistance was encountered from Evatt. The phase relates to activities of the Royal Commission subsequent to the 1954 Federal Election.

The viciousness, vindictiveness, extent and cunning of Operation Petrov are without parallel in recorded history.

## PHASE I – PRELIMINARY OBJECTIVES

Newspaper files for 1954 reveal the pattern of strategy as it developed.

### **Count down:**

The Royal Visit to Australia lasted throughout February and March 1954. On 1<sup>st</sup> April, Queen Elizabeth departed from Australia. During the 58-day visit there had been a lull in political activity on the Federal level.

The election was set for 29<sup>th</sup> May. According to Evatt this was the last date permissible under the constitution. A close election was in prospect with a good chance of the ALP, under Evatt, being returned as the government. Parliament was due to conclude its sittings on 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1954.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1954 – 35 days after he had discussed his impending defection with a high officer of the Security Service – Vladimir Petrov, a member of the staff of the Russian Embassy, signed a statement seeking asylum in Australia. The next day, 3<sup>rd</sup> April, he was paid the sum of £5,000. Petrov is known to have sighted the money in the hands of a security officer several weeks previously. On 4<sup>th</sup> April 1954, high-ranking officers of the Security Service visited the Prime Minister with documents delivered to them by Petrov.

Of all this activity the Australian people remained blissfully unaware.

### **Zero Hour:**

Zero Hour for Operation Petrov was 8.00pm, 13<sup>th</sup> April 1954, less than 24 hours prior to the termination of the 20<sup>th</sup> Parliament. To a surprised opposition, and an equally surprised Australia, Menzies announced Petrov's defection. In the same statement he announced his intention to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate espionage.

The significant points in the announcement were:

1. Vladimir Petrov – a member of the staff of the Russian Embassy - had defected.
2. Documents had been delivered by Petrov to the Security Service.
3. These documents revealed the “outlines of systematic espionage”.
4. Australians were referred to in the Petrov papers under cover of code names.
5. A Royal Commission was to be appointed to investigate the Soviet espionage revealed in the documents. This had been decided on by Cabinet to whom Menzies had revealed Petrov’s defection on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1954.

“Defection” is an omnibus word which can cover such possible situations as personality clashes within the embassy, dereliction of duty and prospects of punishment, indiscipline as evidenced in over-indulgence on liquor, and so on. Menzies indicated that “defection” in Petrov’s case meant “idealism”. He quoted Petrov’s statement.

6. “I no longer believe in the Communism of the Soviet leadership – I no longer believe in Communism, since I have seen the Australian way of living.”  
Interpretation could depend, of course, on exactly what Petrov had in mind when he used the phrase “Australian way of living”. He was somewhat of a toper.

Viewed in retrospect, there was one remarkable omission from the announcement –

7. Petrov was paid £5,000 on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1954. No mention was made of this fact by Menzies. The omission was all the more remarkable in that Petrov included a pointed request for assistance in the statement which Menzies read to Parliament:

“I wish to become an Australian citizen as soon as possible and I ask for protection for myself and assistance to establish myself comfortably in this country.”

The many vacant benches on the Opposition side of the House indicated the setting in which the announcement was made. Government members were in the House in force. No prior consultation had taken place between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition concerning the appointment of a Royal Commission. Evatt was in Sydney when the announcement was made, having left Canberra after 5.00pm. No attempt was made to contact him before he left. The suggestive force of the whole of Menzies’ statement was that –

8. Events had occurred with surprising suddenness forcing him to take strong and decisive action.

In conclusion –

9. Menzies asked Parliament to approve his proposal for a Royal Commission.

The facts, when they emerged, showed that Menzies misled the House completely. But the ALP could be excused for not knowing this on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1954.

### **The pincers movement:**

Morning newspapers of 14<sup>th</sup> April 1954, blazed the story of Petrov's defection. The 20<sup>th</sup> Parliament was due to terminate the same day. The ALP, under the leadership of Evatt, was caught in a carefully timed pincers movement of conflicting pressures. There was no time for reasoned consideration of Menzies' statement. To approve Menzies' proposal was to accept his assessment of documents which the ALP had never sighted. To resist the will of Menzies – to oppose or attempt to delay in Parliament in any way his request for an amendment to the Royal Commission Act – would be trumpeted by the press as assistance to communist subversion and espionage.

No responsible parliamentarian could doubt Menzies' integrity on a matter of such importance to the nation, for to do so would be petty and dishonourable.

But to approve a Royal Commission would be to transfer the issue into the field of detached judicial investigation and remove it from political debate. Safe in this assurance, in the dying hours of the 20<sup>th</sup> Parliament, the ALP joined with the government coalition parties to approve the appointment of a Royal Commission.

### **Preliminary objectives attained:**

Menzies had attained his 3 preliminary objectives:

1. The unanimous support of parliament for his investigation into espionage.  
(This conveniently ignored the fact that that the decision rested entirely on acceptance of Menzies' assessment of the significance of the Petrov papers, no ALP man having sighted them).
2. He had left himself in possession of the field with the ball at his feet.
3. He had cleared the way for full-scale press treatment of the Petrov defection and spy-hunt throughout the six-week election campaign period. (15<sup>th</sup> April – 29<sup>th</sup> May).

If the Petrov papers were not the espionage documents Menzies represented them to be, then Parliament had been held to ransom. Whatever the future was to hold on this aspect, one thing was already certain.

On the eve of an election Menzies had delivered Australia into the hands of the newspapers.

## **PHASE II – INITIAL ASSAULT**

Menzies capitalised on the element of surprise and moved with speed. On 13/4/1954 at 8.00pm, he had not been "in a position to make a full statement" to Parliament. His powers of assimilation of the Petrov material thenceforward proved remarkable. In a series of press statements he reinforced the

obvious weaknesses in his story, at the same time proceeding with the initial assault on Evatt and the ALP. The elements of his strategy emerge from newspaper reports from the period following his Zero Hour speech.

Thus he justified the timing of his speech and his failure to notify Evatt; after delivering Australia to the newspapers he expressly deprecated sensationalism; he explained away the incriminating relationship of the alleged espionage to his own 5-year tenure of office (with its responsibility for security). At the same time he propagated the idea that Petrov's documents really were sufficiently important to justify a Royal Commission; he insinuated at first, then gave greater prominence to the idea that the "espionage" in the documents might take a different form from that usually considered to be espionage, also suggesting that the guilty parties might not be prosecutable; he allowed it to become known that parliamentarians, or persons closely connected with parliamentarians, might be called before the Royal Commission.

This detailed, and therefore incriminating, manoeuvring was concealed beneath a smokescreen of hysteria, which even included a suggestion that some Australians would endeavour to "murder" Petrov. Full use was made of the diplomatic turmoil which followed Petrov's defection: the flight of Mrs Petrov from Sydney to Darwin provided an occasion to whip up public hysteria. How he achieved all this and still managed to pose as pure and pious is documented in a later section.

This activity went on apace while the initial assault was directed at 4 main objectives:

- (a). To embroil the ALP in a political controversy on Petrov - Communism throughout the period of the election campaign (15<sup>th</sup> April – 29<sup>th</sup> May),
- (b). To make it appear that this controversy had been brought on by the ALP itself, not by Menzies or his associates,
- (c). To direct attention, in advance, to the addresses to be delivered by Counsel outlining "the salient features of the espionage plot" at the opening of the Royal Commission,
- (d). To justify opening the Royal Commission while the election campaign was in full swing.

Menzies achieved these objectives in one stroke when Evatt walked into a trap carefully laid for him.

### **TACTICS: METHODS: PARTICIPATING PARTIES:**

In the leading newspapers which appeared in the days immediately following Zero Hour, you will find many reports based on the –

hints...	of	...“Canberra sources”
speculations...	of	...“Canberra Officials”
revelations...	of	...“legal opinion”
beliefs...	of	...“Federal politicians”

beliefs... of ...“Federal politicians”  
alarm... of ...“Cabinet”  
forecasts... of ...“the Government”

These reports are all traceable to Menzies. They appeared in a variety of guises in a variety of newspapers. Had they all been directly attributed to him, it would have been obvious that he was ticking off items on a list or programme. With the co-operation of the press, and the use of this technique, he reinforced his weaknesses, opened the way for his main thrust yet to come, and created a smoke screen of hysteria to conceal a trap set for Evatt.

### **The trap: There were 4 main moves –**

#### **Move 1: (14/4/1954):**

Menzies emphasised from the very beginning:-

- (a) That he regarded the Royal Commission into espionage as being entirely removed from politics. It was a national, not a party matter.
- (b) That the motives of the government were pure as the driven snow. There was to be no ‘McCarthyism’. The timing too, was accidental. The government was embarrassed by it.

The press emphasised at the very beginning:-

- (c) That the unanimous approval given in parliament on 14<sup>th</sup> April revealed the virtual identity of interest of the two main political groups.

#### **Move 2: (15/4/1954 onwards).**

Menzies then baited Dr. Evatt with a series of daily running commentaries concerning what the Petrov documents might reveal.

Evatt, realising the source of the commentaries and recognising the obvious abuse by Menzies of his position, failed to realise that it was a trap. He gave a measured and judicial evaluation of Menzies’ commentaries, pointing out that the prognostications they contained were highly improper under the circumstances.

#### **Move 3: (About 19/4/1954).**

The newspapers, acting in concert, and as though by pre-arrangement –

- (d). Condemned Evatt for bringing ‘politics’ into the Petrov investigation,
- (e). Emphasised that Menzies was almost as pure as the driven snow,

- (f). Pointed out that the ALP could not now complain if Menzies, and the party he led, retaliated.

The arrogance of the newspapers is perhaps best illustrated by the Sydney Morning Herald editorial of 19<sup>th</sup> April 1954.

The editorial writer saw fit to give Evatt, a jurist of international reputation, a lesson in jurisprudence.

The Courier Mail gave authority to ALP comments it pressed into service for the same purpose by introducing Evatt's name.

At the same time a new and consistent note entered newspaper comment. Evatt was 'intemperate'. This theme was to be developed as the election progressed. And the newspapers discovered that the position was becoming 'confused'.

#### **Move 4:**

Trading on the confusion which they themselves had deliberately introduced, the newspapers then directed public attention to the light shining in the darkness; the opening day of the Royal Commission. This was the day on which, without doubt, all the confusion wrought by political accusations and recriminations would be dispelled. It was a day for the public to look forward to. The obvious thing was to begin the sittings of the Commission before the election was held on 29<sup>th</sup> May in order to clear the air.

From 19<sup>th</sup> April onwards the Age called for the opening of the Commission prior to election day. Other newspapers reflected the same attitude. Apparently the editorial writer of the Age had forgotten – or hoped readers had forgotten – that on 15/4/1954 a statement appeared on the front page of the Age to the effect that "the outlining of the salient features of the espionage plot" which counsel would give at the first sitting of the Commission would be "sensational".

The link between Move 3 and Move 4 is stated explicitly in the Age editorial of 19/4/1954.

This pattern of newspaper comment began on 14/4/1954 and reveals beyond question that the press had prior notice of Menzies' plan. Menzies, in delivering Australia to the press, had foreknowledge of the use that would be made of the position. The method of handling material differed from one newspaper to another, but the essential emphasis was exactly the same in each.

### **PHASE III – COMBINED OPERATIONS**

By the end of April 1954, the way had been cleared for the major assault on Evatt and the ALP. There were two main groups working in conjunction with the press.

#### **Group 1:**

Function – To link Evatt and the ALP with Communism,  
Identity – Politicians.

Throughout the election campaign Menzies' supporters continually linked Evatt and the ALP with Petrov-Communism.

A few references will serve to index the pattern. (SMH = Sydney Morning Herald; CM = Courier Mail).

SMH 5/5/1954: Menzies made an 'oblique' reference to Petrov in his policy speech.

Age 5/5/1954: "P.M. taunts labor on communism." Fadden also referred to the Royal Commission.

Age 6/5/1954: Fadden said he did not wish to deal with the Petrov case; but only Menzies' government would implement the findings of the Commission.

SMH 6/5/1954: Harrison tilted at Evatt on Communism.

CM 7/5/1954: "Menzies pledge to City Hall meeting. MAY SEEK AGAIN ANTI-RED POWER. Oblique reference to Petrov case".

In this strain the election continued. Liberal party advertisements linked Evatt with Communism. Menzies accused his opposition of protecting and defending Communism. Members of Cabinet struck up a Communist theme. Fadden linked Evatt with Communism in a specially prepared 13-point formula. All this to a background of 'Petrov' conjecture and hysteria kept going by the press. On 26/5/1954 Fadden was still hard at it in Western Australia.

## **Group 2:**

Function – To link Communism with espionage and Soviet hostility.  
Identity – Judiciary.

The Royal Commission opened in Canberra on 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> May. It then adjourned until June. The opening day of the Commission was well-produced and well-directed, but was only as 'sensational' as newspaper headlines could make it. Here are some representative headlines and comments:

CM	17/5/1954	"Strong bodyguard on three Petrov Royal Commissioners."
CM	18/5/1954	"RUSSIAN SECRET SERVICE HAD FIVE AIMS IN AUSTRALIA. PLANS INCLUDED FIFTH COLUMN. ROYAL COMMISSION SITS."
SMH	18/5/1954	"HOSTILE SOVIET ACTIVITY TO BE REVEALED."
Age	18/5/1954	"HE FEARED DEATH IN RUSSIA."
SMH	19/5/1954	"Inquiry told of Spy Ring."
CM	19/5/1954	"RED SPY INQUIRY DISCLOSURES ... SECRETS PASSED OUT TO RUSSIA Documents in."

The Commission sat for only 20 minutes on the third day (19<sup>th</sup> May). The dominant impression given at the first sittings was that Australia had been gravely menaced by Soviet espionage. Great revelations were to come at the June sittings after the elections. The opening sittings managed very successfully to maintain the illusion that Petrov's defection had been sudden and shattering. The truth concerning security's dealings with him over a period of 3 years was yet to be revealed. The Security officer who paid Petrov £5,000 on 3/4/1954 gave his evidence on 18<sup>th</sup> May. He dealt with the events of 3<sup>rd</sup> April. No mention was made of the £5,000. Instead the Commission was told such trivia as "(Petrov) felt thirsty and dropped in for a glass of beer" and that Petrov was now able to attend "theatres and other sporting events, (Laughter)." (Age 19/5/1954).

### **A model campaign:**

Menzies fought the 1954 election on 3 principles deliberately chosen – **doubt, fear and confusion**. Doubt of Evatt, fear of Communism, and confusion of the issues. It was Hitler's policy of the Reichstag fire all over again. In this assault on the people's minds, the press, the politicians, and certain of the judiciary, all played key roles. Menzies' final victory by a slender majority, was the product of this carefully conceived combined operation.

## **PHASE IV – MOPPING UP OPERATIONS**

From the dominating heights of the prime ministership, Menzies was now in a position to 'mop-up' his opposition.

The Royal Commission resumed its sittings in June and it soon became clear that the investigation had undergone a subtle change in direction. Espionage was no longer the point of concern. Much time was occupied in establishing the authorship of, and generally discussing, documents "H" and "J". These were not espionage documents. They had another significance. What the significance was soon became clear. These documents came to be identified with the name of the Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Evatt.

The Commission failed miserably to live up to the 'sensational' expectancy created for it before the elections. It proved dull and uninteresting to many Australians. But the circumstances surrounding documents "H" and "J" will never lose interest.

The June Sydney sittings soon adjourned to Melbourne; but not before the following statement appeared in the press:

"Mr. Windeyer said evidence by the Petrovs would take some days. At the end of their general evidence the Petrovs would go on to the first particular matter to be dealt with – to find out who were the authors of documents "H" and "J". (Brisbane Telegraph, 11/6/1954).

### **Document H:**

The author of this document proved to be “Evatt’s former press secretary”, Fergan O’Sullivan. When first called before the Commission O’Sullivan refused to answer questions. Later he lost his timidity and acknowledged authorship. Present with him on the latter occasion was a close relative. “They smiled at each other often.” (Courier Mail 15/7/1954). The following facts concerning O’Sullivan and document H need no embellishment.

- (a) “H” was written by O’Sullivan in 1951.
- (b) At that time he was not Evatt’s press secretary. He was a reporter with the Sydney Morning Herald.
- (c) In early 1953 Evatt employed as press secretary a person (female) who was not a journalist.
- (d) O’Sullivan at this time was Secretary of the press gallery in Canberra.
- (e) The Australian Journalists’ Association represented to Evatt that he should place a professional journalist in the position of press secretary.
- (f) The journalist so placed as a result was O’Sullivan.
- (g) O’Sullivan began duties with Evatt in April 1953.
- (h) His duties were not ‘secretarial’ but simply press-relations work. The term ‘secretary’ had no real significance.
- (i) O’Sullivan’s connection with the Petrov papers was known to Menzies – officially – long before Windeyer announced that the Commission would concentrate on the authorship of “H” and “J”.
- (j) Evatt was not told of this connection until early June 1954. O’Sullivan was immediately dismissed.

When the authorship of “H” was revealed at the Commission, it became known as a document of sinister character associated with the leader of the Opposition.

Readers capable of evaluating evidence – or even those, familiar with American detective fiction – will notice something much more sinister in the sequence of facts enumerated above. There are a further two facts which readers may consider relevant. These are:

- (k) The eventual defection of Petrov had been foreshadowed in an article in a Victorian Sectarian publication on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1953, that is, 3 months before O’Sullivan joined Evatt’s staff and 15 months before the defection took place.
- (l) On 16<sup>th</sup> April 1954, Menzies had said: “He (ie Spry, head of Security) himself interviewed Petrov when he sought asylum and satisfied himself that the whole thing was voluntary.” Replying to a question Mr. Menzies said that another part of the reason for Colonel Spry seeing Petrov was to satisfy himself that Petrov was not a ‘plant’. (Courier Mail, 17/4/1954).

The Security Service, after many dealings with Petrov, had no reason to suspect that Petrov was a ‘plant’. The statement is ridiculous. But readers will find it most interesting that Menzies was conscious of such a possibility. Most interesting. It is not every Prime Minister who can talk with easy familiarity about ‘plants’.

### **Document J:**

Whether this 'document' was really one document or a group of documents, or whether it ever originally contained the page Dr. Evatt particularly complained about, need not be discussed here. The Commission had before it a Communist journalist who was accused of being its author. There was no connection between this journalist and Evatt's staff. However, inevitably, two of Evatt's staff – Dalziel and Grundeman – were mentioned in it. Again a document of sinister character became identified with Dr. Evatt. "The outlines of systematic espionage" referred to by Menzies in his Zero Hour speech seemed to be receding further and further into the back ground. It was on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1954, in an atmosphere of odium and without warning, that two members of Evatt's staff were named in connection with document J.

This demonstrated an interesting reversal of principle:

15/7/1954: Commissioner Owen found it 'very disturbing' that Evatt's staff should be nominated as the source of information in the document. Despite this disturbance he made the inexplicable statement that there was no reflection on Evatt; the information in the document had been 'very confidential'.

14/4/1954: The government (ie Menzies) said there would be no 'McCarthy' tactics at the Commission. Any person named was to have the opportunity of giving an immediate answer.

11/6/1954: Commissioner Owen made a statement somewhat similar to that of Menzies of 14/4/1954.

In the naming of Evatt's staff on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1954, the Commission did not put into practice those high principles which it had previously espoused. By Menzies' definition it put into practice the principles of McCarthyism.

### **Unexpected resistance:**

But this time the naming of his staff had not caught Evatt off guard. He had received an accidental warning of what was coming a month before, in June. His response, a telegram of protest, reached the commission on 16/7/1954. Embodied in it was a request that the contents be recorded permanently in the proceedings of the commission. The tactic was well thought out. A month later, on 16/8/1954, Evatt gained access to the Royal Commission as a representative of his staff. In a bitter engagement he turned the attackers back upon themselves. Events trace out an interesting pattern for the period of this confrontation of the commission and the period subsequent to Evatt being debarred. (7<sup>th</sup> September 1954):

- (1) Grundeman and Dalziel named without warning. Owen, Royal Commissioner, found the suggestion 'very disturbing' that they had been the sources of information for the author of Document "J". Evatt's connection with Document "J", through his staff was trumpeted by the press: 15/7/1954.
- (2) Evatt's protest telegram received by the commission: 16/7/1954.

- (3) Menzies told parliament that had he released to the public in his zero hour speech on 13/4/1954, the names of Evatt's staff mentioned in the Petrov papers, Evatt "would not be here tonight". 12/8/1954.
- (4) Evatt appeared at the Royal Commission in person to defend Dalziel and Grundeman: 16/8/1954.
- (5) Evatt debarred from the commission. He had protested publicly, in his position as Leader of the Opposition, at the role played by the French Ambassador in the arrest of Madame Ollier. During his period at the commission, Evatt had alleged that there was a conspiracy against him which he was entitled to expose: 7/9/1954.
- (6) Owen referred to the material connected with Dalziel as 'gossip': 12/9/1954.
- (7) Barwick, representing the Security Service, commenting on a section of Document J particularly complained of by Evatt, said: "How this material could harm the Australian Labour Party is beyond all comprehension". 6/10/1954.
- (8) Menzies told the House that the references to Evatt's staff in Document J were "completely innocent" and a "bit of petty political gossip": 28/10/1954.

The full flavour of these, and other, somersaults by Menzies and Owen will come from a reading in full of the evidence. In (1) and (3) they were attacking Evatt on the basis of the references in "J"; in (6) and (8) they endeavoured to refute his allegations of a conspiracy by saying that the references in "J" were innocuous.

The press did not notice the contradiction involved.

### **Diversionsary attack:**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1954, the secretary of the Royal Commission announced from "a guarded house at Rose Bay" that Madame Rose Marie Ollier, former second secretary at the French Embassy in Canberra, had been arrested in Noumea. A statement by the French Ambassador concerning the arrest was also released through the commission at the same time. Sovereign governments do not make a practice of releasing statements through the agencies of foreign powers, and in this case the unusual procedure tended to bolster the status of the commission by lending to it the authority and the prestige of the French government. Readers may again see some significance in the relevant dates.

The Australian Minister for External Affairs advised the French Ambassador that Madame Ollier appeared to be involved in the Petrov case on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1954. Madame Ollier was ordered to New Caledonia by the French Government on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1954. She apparently received this order on 19<sup>th</sup> May and departed from Australia on 21<sup>st</sup> May.

Evatt intervened by telegram in the affairs of the commission on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1954.

Madame Ollier's arrest followed evidence at a secret sitting of the Espionage Royal Commission held in Melbourne on 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> July 1954. Evatt appeared in person at the Royal Commission on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1954. Madame Ollier was notified of the charges against her on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1954.

Madame Ollier was the only person charged as a result of the proceedings of the Royal Commission. The Australian Commissioners must have badly misconstrued the nature of the evidence taken at the

secret sittings in July. Madame Ollier was acquitted of the charge of 'Indiscretion' in France. We may regard ourselves as fortunate that the commissioners did not misconstrue any of the evidence taken at the open public sittings of the commission as having 'espionage' significance.

There is a piece of Australian territory in Antarctica where a person could be held incommunicado should the Australian government desire it. It would seem that the commissioners – or the Australian government, or Menzies, or whoever was responsible – preferred that Madame Ollier be sent out of Australian jurisdiction to Noumea. That way there could be no suggestion that Madame Ollier was being kept on ice.

The Ollier arrest is the shame of a nation. The nation is France.

### **Isolation and containment:**

In his short period at the commission Evatt complained that he was the victim of a "base conspiracy". The press, of course, knew of no such conspiracy. One only has to review the efforts of their cartoonists at the time to realise this. The peculiar direction that an investigation into espionage had taken, the peculiar emphasis placed on documents "H" and "J" by the way they had received primacy of treatment, the peculiar manner in which Evatt's name came to be connected with both documents, the peculiar manner in which the name of Evatt – and of no other parliamentarian of prominence, though many were named in the documents – was being smogged in an aroma of communism and odium, the peculiar manner in which the **Sydney Morning Herald** reporter O'Sullivan, came to be known as "Evatt's press secretary" .... these things no doubt, bred in Evatt's judicially disciplined mind the notion that the Petrov affair was simply a "frame-up".

But the newspapers did not notice these peculiarities. They were too busy with their caricatures and cartoons of Evatt.

A few days after Evatt made his allegations regarding a conspiracy he was debarred from the commission because of his protest over Madame Ollier's arrest. He knew, what is surely obvious to all, that the names of his staff had been introduced only for the purpose of striking at him. The only importance of Dalziel and Grundeman (in terms of the Commission) lay in their connection with Dr. Evatt. After Evatt was debarred an attempt was made to drive a wedge between him and the staff he represented. On 16<sup>th</sup> September 1954, Evatt recorded this fact permanently in an application for readmission to the Commission.

He said: "In the absence of counsel, an attempt has been made to secure from my clients a withdrawal of charges that had been made,"

Had this attempt succeeded, Evatt would have been completely isolated, and his allegations of conspiracy once more trumpeted as intemperate by the press. As it was, they were still too busy with their caricatures and cartoons.

### **The immolation of Evatt:**

We shall discuss the methods of Evatt's immolation in the section "Tactics and Methods (Analysis)". It is sufficient to note here the suggestion that was made early in the election campaign concerning Evatt's alleged 'intemperance'. The theme appeared and reappeared. There is now a concerted attempt to give this picture of Evatt a sort of historical validity. One would not have to seek far for the motives which lie behind the smear. There are many who have much to lose if the truth gets out, and the suggestion is a shield behind which the assassins and liars hope to take cover from the judgement of history – and from the judgement to come.

### **The £5,000:**

You will recall that no mention was made at the initial sittings of the Commission concerning the payment to Petrov of £5,000 on 3/4/1954. Just before Evatt entered the Commission, about a month after the payment first became known in July 1954, Menzies made a statement, which included the words:

“ ‘I learned about the £5,000 payment for the first time on Sunday May 9<sup>th</sup> ... When I was asked what was to be done about it, I said evidence should be led in its proper place ... and the whole matter explained. These were my personal instructions,’ Mr. Menzies said.” (SMH 13/8/1954).

As the Security officer Richards gave his evidence on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1954, nine days after Menzies gave these instructions according to his own statement, and made no reference to the payment, we can only wonder what event was associated with 9<sup>th</sup> May that made Menzies acknowledge this date as the day he first learned of the payment, and thus lead him to make an inadvertently incriminating statement.

### **Indecisive:**

Phase IV – the mopping up operation – produced an indecisive result. In October 1954, Dr. Evatt brought to the notice of the Australian people the presence of a white-ant group within the ALP, which had assisted Menzies during the 1954 election. The group was identified as Catholic Action and was centred mainly in Victoria. It owed its allegiance to Santamaria and the aged Archbishop Mannix. (See pamphlet No. 22 for full documentation). With Evatt's attack on this white-ant group occupying the headlines, the Royal Commission was left to meander on its meaningless way.

Few Australians would know, or care, how it finished up.

## **TACTICS AND METHODS (ANALYSIS)**

The tactics and methods used throughout Operation Petrov were successfully concealed at the time. It is possible in this short section to give only the skeletal framework.

Supporters of the Menzies-Petrov alliance adopted:

**The Pose:** “Purity Piety, Patriotism.” This was a natural posture. Most members of the Liberal Party imagine themselves as pure, pious and patriotic.

**The Practice:** Voluble Boatmen.” A boatman is a person who looks one way but rows another. The boatmen looked in the direction of piety but practised the art of slander and smear.

**The Method:** “The oblique attack.” This form of attack has all the advantages of a direct assault but none of its disadvantages. It provides the character assassin with a cover-up. While engaged in smearing he is able to pose as pure, pious and patriotic. The target was slandered and smeared by –

indirect (oblique) references	slips of the pen
being attacked by agents	slips of the tongue
association with something odious	slips of the memory
(both single references and chain references)being attacked through substitutes.	

The Petrov affair was one long oblique attack on Dr. Evatt. Individual instances of the method are document “H”, document “J”, Menzies’ references to communism and Liberal Party references to Evatt throughout the election campaign, Owen’s references to Evatt’s staff .... there is no end to the list.

The oblique attack, directed as it was at the political destruction of one man, commencing as it did in the Zero Hour speech of Menzies, continued as it was in the newspapers immediately afterwards and subsequently by the Royal Commission, reveals clearly and with certainty that the tactics and ultimate object of Operation Petrov was predetermined before the operation was launched.

The oblique attack – modus operandi – is a fingerprint identifying beyond question those who conspired together to destroy Dr. Evatt.

### **CAMOUFLAGE AND CONCEALMENT (ANALYSIS)**

The following elements are a few of those used to conceal the ultimate object of Operation Petrov from observation by the Australian people.

- (1) Speed of events
- (2) Deliberate spreading of fear, doubt and confusion.
- (3) The pattern of what was going on not being perceivable in the newspapers of any one Australian city.
- (4) The method of oblique attack.
- (5) Press reports, which did not specify exactly the sources of information.
- (6) The detail and strange names associated with the lengthy reports of the Commission’s daily sittings.
- (7) The pretence that Operation Petrov was concerned with communism and espionage. A communist usually came into the picture somewhere to give the Commission the looked-for aroma.
- (8) The reputation of the Australian newspapers for being ‘Tory Rags’ (ie newspapers supporting the Liberal Party) and for being ‘sensationalist’. On this occasion Australians failed to notice that what they mistook for traditional bias and sensationalism was actually part of a much more insidious operation.

- (9) The reputation of the Liberal Party for parading the ‘communist tiger’ at Australian elections from the time of Federation in 1901. Australians were inured to it. But in 1954; in the artificially created crisis of the Petrov defection, with hysteria continually whipped up by inspired reports appearing in the press, something much more diabolical was attempted under the guise of the traditional ‘anti-communism’.
- (10) Menzies’ own reputation for the ‘gift of the gab’ (ie rotund oratory). Normally his indirections served no purpose other than adornment. Menzies’ speech launching the Petrov campaign was calculated and purposeful. It was a masterpiece of indirection, but those most accustomed to Menzies missed this underlying purposefulness.

There was, however, one glaring anomaly in Menzies’ Zero Hour statement which no amount of camouflage could conceal and which no experienced politician should have missed. In his Zero Hour statement Menzies gave the impression that he had made a swift decision.

He never made a swift decision in his life.

### **OPERATIONAL REPORT**

The following quotations from the Age, Courier Mail (CM) and Sydney Morning Herald (SMH) are shown according to the date of the newspaper in which they appeared. The list therefore reflects something of the order in which events were reported by these newspapers.

The pattern of tactics can be deciphered by referring the statements back to the Zero Hour statement of Menzies, referring them forward to the actual evidence as it unfolded at the Commission, viewing them in terms of the subsequent arrest of Madame Ollier, or relating them to the real target of Operation Petrov as it was ultimately revealed.

**14<sup>th</sup> April 1954:** (Menzies’ announcement made 8.00pm 13/4/1954).

- (1) “Mr. Menzies deliberate use of the word “espionage” and the circumstances of its use show that the Government regards the information as of great importance and gravity.” (Age Editorial).
- (2) “The Government wants to be certain that citizens named in the documents are given an immediate chance to answer the allegations before the Commission. It does not want any names bandied about before the Commission begins.” (Age, similarly SMH and CM).
- (3) “Mr. Menzies was informed he (ie Petrov) was seeking political asylum a week ago and this was granted almost at once ...” (Age).
- (4) “It was learned tonight that Mr. Menzies was fully satisfied that a case had been made out proving that a very involved Soviet espionage system existed in Australia and that a number of Australians were involved in it before he decided to take action.” (Age).
- (5) “But Cabinet yesterday was alarmed at the prima facie evidence of a spy ring centred in the national capital, operated by a foreign power, and allegedly using Australians as agents.” (CM also SMH).
- (6) “Cabinet Ministers last night declared that Petrov was a man of undoubtedly great courage. They are determined to see that his courage is rewarded.” (CM).

- (7) “Before the House resumed last night, Mr. Menzies sought to contact the Opposition Leader (Dr. Evatt) and inform him of Petrov’s flight and the Government’s action ... Cabinet Ministers said Mr. Menzies considered postponing last night’s action, but was unable to do so because of the need to give notice of introducing a Bill.” (CM, SMH).
- (8) “It was reported this morning that Petrov had given the Australian Government a 'safe full of files' – the really secret safe from the Russian Embassy.” (SMH).

**15<sup>th</sup> April 1954:** (Parliament terminated on 14/4/1954).

- (9) “His (Petrov’s) liking for the Australian way of life led him to adopt customs somewhat foreign to the usual run of Russian diplomats. He was frequently seen in Canberra hotels drinking with a good cross-section of people.” (Age).
- (10) “The outlines of the salient features of the espionage plot which counsel assisting the Commission is expected to give at the first sittings will be sensational.” (Age. Note the date).
- (11) “He (Menzies) said that he regretted that Dr. Evatt should have found it necessary to emphasise earlier in the House that this was not a party matter. ‘I had taken that for granted,’ Mr. Menzies said.” (CM).
- (12) “Before Mr. Menzies introduced the Bill, Dr. Evatt said that he would have cancelled his engagement in Sydney last night if he had known before 5.00pm that the Prime Minister was to make such an important statement to the House at 8.00pm.” (CM).
- (13) “‘These are grave matters and they require searching examination,’ the Prime Minister said.” (CM).
- (14) “Ministers hinted that although the story of Petrov’s flight from the Iron Curtain was sensational internationally, it would be exceeded by the revelations affecting Australian security and communism as the case developed.” (CM).
- (15) “... virtual identity of views of the two main political groups.” (Age).
- (16) “There was no division in the Federal Parliament yesterday.” (CM). (Observe also the manner in which a similar statement appeared on the front page of the Courier Mail on 14/4/1954).
- (17) “Some Canberra sources forecast today that people closely associated with politicians would be named in the Petrov case. There is speculation that some members of parliament may have to give evidence in the inquiry following the disclosures of these names.” (SMH). (See Nos. 22, 23, 24, below).
- (18) “Legal opinion in Canberra is that the choice of a Royal Commission as the means of investigation suggests that Mr. Menzies expects that most of the communist activities revealed will not be of the kind susceptible to legal prosecution.” (SMH). (Except the activities of Madame Ollier, a French woman!).
- (19) “The Commission will investigate revelations contained in sensational Russian Embassy files ....” (SMH).

**16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> April 1954:** (No papers in some states. Good Friday.)

- (20) “Menzie’s said ‘He (Spry) himself had interviewed Petrov ... to satisfy himself that Petrov was not a plant.’” (CM, 17/4/1954. SMH same interview 16/4/1954).
- (21) “On April 3<sup>rd</sup> he left the Embassy at Canberra with hundreds of its most secret documents ...” (CM).
- (22) “I think I ought to add this – I (Menzie’s) want to deprecate sensational speculation on this matter.” (SMH). (Refer 14, 17, 19 above).
- (23) “ ‘Mr Menzie’s’ day by day commentaries referring to the investigation of the Petrov affair call for very close attention,’ Dr. Evatt said. ‘In some cases they amount to an unjustified interference with the processes of just investigation .... Mr. Menzie’s has also made the sly insinuation that members of Parliament might be called as witnesses ....’ ” (SMH).

**19<sup>th</sup> April 1954:**

- (24) “BRINGING THE PETROV CASE INTO PARTY POLITICS ... It is not so much with these pronouncements as with the Prime Minister’s extra-parliamentary ‘commentaries’ that Dr. Evatt bitterly found fault ... If what is strictly a question of national security becomes a lively issue in the election campaign, the responsibility will lie not with Mr. Menzie’s, but with Dr. Evatt.” (SMH Editorial). (But this identified the ‘Canberra sources’ of No.17 above).
- (25) “Accusations by Dr. Evatt and rejoinders by Mr. Menzie’s make it clear that unless a halt is called the Petrov affair is certain to be bandied about in the election. Short of agreement to abstain from further controversy, the best thing would be to remove as soon as possible the doubts and misgivings beginning to arise in the public mind. It would be desirable that the Royal Commission sits before the campaign starts .... There is already a tangle of assertion, denial, mystification and conjecture ...” (Age, Editorial).

**Subsequent dates:**

Refer to previous sections for details of political activities during the election and for the sensational opening of the Royal Commission

- (26) “ ‘I DON’T WANT TO GO BACK’ – HEARD IN RUSSIAN ... Many New Australians in the crowd claimed they heard Mrs. Petrov call in Russian: ‘I don’t want to go back’.”(CM 20/4/1954. Concerning incidents at Mascot airport).
- (27) “MRS. PETROV WAS TERRIFIED ... Federal Cabinet Ministers revealed in Canberra last night that Mrs. Evdokia A. Petrov was a terrified woman when she sought asylum in Darwin yesterday morning.” (CM 21/4/1954).
- (28) On 21<sup>st</sup> April, the Age Editorial called for a prompt opening of the Commission.
- (29) On 22<sup>nd</sup> April, the Age Editorial repeated its call.

- (30) “ ... the way is clear for the opening of the next phase in the Petrov case. There should be no delay now in setting up the proposed Royal Commission. The need for an early presentation of the facts is daily becoming more urgent.” (Age Editorial 30/4/1954).
- (31) Menzies commented on Evatt’s speech “The people will not be misled by such a farrago of nonsense.”(Age 7/5/1954).
- (32) “The Federal Treasurer (Sir A. Fadden) today described as nonsense suggestions that the Prime Minister (Mr. Menzies) had placed an embargo on the mention of communism or Petrov during the election campaign.” (Age 8/5/1954).
- (33) “ ‘Grave matters’ in documents, says Windeyer.” (CM 18/5/1954. Report of opening of Royal Commission).
- (34) “I cannot too strongly emphasise that this inquiry is concerned with treasonable activities, espionage and other such acts ...” (Age. Windeyer. 18/5/1954).
- (35) Richards of the Security Service gave his evidence. There was no mention of the payment to Petrov of £5,000. (Age).
- (36) “Sensations are expected when the Royal Commission on Espionage resumes some weeks hence ...” (Age).
- (37) Windeyer at the Royal Commission – “The contents of the document appear to us to be a farrago of facts, falsity and filth ... The documents also showed the existence of a spy ring of Australian citizens ...” (Age 19/5/1954).

#### **Parliament resumed in August, 1954.**

- (38) Menzies, in Parliament, replied to Evatt: “...a statement by Dr. Evatt ... also containing, if I may borrow the word from another place, a farrago of ideas ...” (SMH 13/8/1954). “The name of Petrov became known to me for the first time on Saturday or Sunday night, I think, April 10<sup>th</sup> at the Lodge ...” (CM 13/8/1954). Menzies claimed that every candidate was instructed: “There was to be no reference to the Petrov case” (CM 13/8/1954. Refer No.32 above).
- (39) “Dr. Evatt said he could prove it was an open secret that Petrov was planning to seek political asylum in Australia as early as January 28<sup>th</sup> 1953.” (CM 2/9/1954).
- (40) Bialoguski, Security Agent, in evidence: “Bialoguski said that early in March he told Petrov Mr. Richards had £5,000 which he would give him when he had signed an application for political asylum. At a meeting on March 19<sup>th</sup> Richards placed the money on the floor in front of Petrov and told him it would be his when he signed the document.” (Brisbane Telegraph 10/9/1954).
- (41) For information on O’Sullivan, see Courier Mail of 17/8/1954.
- (42) For details of Petrov’s dealings with Security see Courier Mail of 8/9/1954 and 10/9/1954.
- (43) “Granted permission to read through document J, Dalziel later agreed there was nothing adverse to either the Prime Minister or Dr. Evatt in it.” (Brisbane Telegraph 13/9/1954).
- (44) For the fact that Security officers visited Menzies with the Petrov documents on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1954, see Courier Mail 9/9/1954. “Richards said that, on April 4<sup>th</sup>, Colonel Spry, himself and an interpreter went to Canberra, where they saw the Prime Minister (Mr. Menzies) ... Mr. Menzies “handled Document J.” (Compare point 38 with 44).

## **Decipherment of Operational Report:**

The items above have been numbered for your convenience. By relating the information given, you will perceive for yourself the pattern of Operation Petrov. Thus: 13 and 33, 31,37 and 38. Who was borrowing from whom?

Space does not permit the pointing out the infinite digressions from the truth which were perpetrated during this period of Australian history. A computer would be necessary for such a task.

### **OPERATION PETROV: INTENTION AND PARTICIPATING PARTIES.**

The intention of Operation Petrov was to foster the image of Dr. H. V. Evatt as a political nincompoop continually moving in, and enveloped by, an aroma of communism; a man who defended communists and employed communist informers. Operation Petrov was designed to destroy Dr. Evatt Politically and to deliver the Australian Labour Party into the hands of a small, well organised group, which owed allegiance to Santamaria and Archbishop Mannix. (This aspect was documented in Pamphlet No.22).

The blueprint of Operation Petrov bears the imprint of a mind acquainted with a military manual. The tactics of the initial surprise attack, the pincers movement, the quick break-through, the fanning out, the disguised direction of the main thrust, the consistent pattern of follow-through .... To discover the identity of the man who conceived Operation Petrov we must look, not to Menzies, but to someone in the inner circle of his acquaintances, someone with the appropriate training, someone with an interest in the overthrow of Dr. Evatt who alone stood between the Civil Liberties of the citizen and the coming into being of a police state .... When there is found a man answering to these requirements, there we shall find the brain which conceived Operation Petrov.

The press could not have held this country, and the Parliament of this country to ransom, had not Parliament eroded itself from within by lies and treachery. And every Parliamentarian, in 1966 and afterwards, who becomes aware of the facts behind the Petrov affair, and does nothing about them, becomes an accessory after the fact.

The Communists were only an incidental interest in the scheming – in the intellectual climate prevailing in 1954 they provided the right aroma.

### **CONCLUSION**

Recent news from England spoke of a BBC television play entitled: “Defection – The case of Colonel Petrov.”

We may amuse ourselves by conjecturing that this drama was composed of the following cast. In drama each character bodies forth some human value. The following casting endeavours to assess the ‘values’ of the ‘actors’ in Operation Petrov. It says nothing concerning the values of the people in real life.

This principle of dramatic construction was utilised by Bernard Shaw in “Saint Joan” –

MENZIES – Machiavelli. Prince of Infamy.

PARLIAMENTARIANS – Machiavelli’s left hand men (anti-communists).

ROYAL COMMISSIONERS - Machiavelli’s right hand men (anti-communists).

MADAME OLLIER – The ‘scapegoat’ loaded with sins and sent off into the wilderness.

DOCTOR EVATT – The defender of Civil Liberties against the attacks of Machiavelli.

WHITE-ANT GROUP – Emissaries from Rome to Machiavelli.

THE PRESS – ‘Honest Iago’.

DALZIEL, GRUNDEMAN – Evatt’s Staff – Dummies.

SECURITY SERVICE – The power behind Machiavelli.

There would be need for counter-balancing events or characters in this drama. We think immediately of the PROFUMO CASE, where a British Cabinet Minister lost his position by misleading Parliament on an intimate personal matter. Another counter-balance would be THE PARLIAMENTARY ADVERTISEMENT CASE where the Australian Parliament showed its concern for its dignity.

It would be a typically Australian play.

We would call it: “MENZIES – PRIMUS INTER MENDACES”.

A whore and the British Parliament sit in judgement on Australian parliamentarians.

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AUTHORISATION: This pamphlet has been compiled by E. P. Wixted,