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**OFFICIAL ATTITUDES TOWARD
CHINA BETWEEN 1945 AND 1957:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
NON-RECOGNITION POLICY**

Thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

This thesis examines how an official attitude of negativity was translated into the policy of non-recognition toward Communist China between 1945 and 1957. It argues that once established the non-recognition policy remained, essentially, a China policy imperative throughout the 12 year period under review. Therefore, with the policy approach fixed there was a need to explain why it was maintained.

In order to demonstrate how the non-recognition policy was established and maintained a number of periods, or stages of development have been identified, each of these correspond to a chapter of the thesis. Within each stage certain events, issues, or themes have dictated the particular chronological parameters. The first encompasses the years 1945 to 1948, and looks at New Zealand's post-war perceptions and attitudes toward China. Another covers 1949 through until 1951, it is in this time frame that the non-recognition policy is established and subsequently maintained by the new National Government. After these two key stages the decision to postpone recognition then became fixed, despite the inclinations of some in official circles to reconsider the non-recognition policy.

How the non-recognition policy was established and maintained is explained by reference to a series of major categories of influence. In the main all of these categories occur throughout the length of the period under examination, some can be stressed more than others, while certain influences are more important in some stages than in others. These categories of influence include: the role of personalities as policy determinants, the importance of events, the influence of allies, the lack of direct New Zealand interests in China, questions of approach like 'dialogue versus isolation' or 'appeasement versus standing up to aggression', and perceptions of a divisible versus monolithic Communism.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|--------------|--|
| <i>AHS</i> | <i>Australian Historical Studies</i> |
| <i>AJHR</i> | <i>Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives</i> |
| <i>AO</i> | <i>Australian Outlook</i> |
| AusDEA | Department of External Affairs (Australia) |
| AusMinEA | Minister of External Affairs (Australia) |
| Anzac | Australia-New Zealand |
| ANZUS | Australia, New Zealand and the United States (Tripartite Security Treaty) 1951 |
| ATL | Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington |
| CCP | Chinese Communist Party |
| CIA | Central Intelligence Agency (United States) |
| CRO | Commonwealth Relations Office (United Kingdom) |
| DEA | Department of External Affairs (New Zealand) |
| <i>DNZER</i> | <i>Documents on New Zealand External Relations</i> , [3 vols., Wellington: Government Printer, 1972, 1982, 1985] |
| DS | Department of State (United States) |
| EA | Department of External Affairs & Prime Minister's Department records, National Archives series classifications |
| <i>EAR</i> | <i>External Affairs Review</i> |
| <i>FRUS</i> | <i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i> |
| IPR | Institute of Pacific Relations |
| JIC | Joint Intelligence Committee (New Zealand) |
| MDT | Mutual Defence Treaty (United States-Republic of China) 1954 |
| MFAT | New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade |

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| MinEA | Minister of External Affairs (New Zealand) |
| MinEACan | Minister of External Affairs (Canada) |
| MP | Member of Parliament |
| NA | New Zealand National Archives, Wellington |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organisation |
| NL | New Zealand National Library, Wellington |
| NP | Nash Papers, National Archives, Wellington |
| NSC | National Security Council (United States) |
| NZAmWash | New Zealand Ambassador, Washington |
| NZCP | New Zealand Communist Party |
| <i>NZEAR</i> | <i>New Zealand External Affairs Review</i> |
| <i>NZFAR</i> | <i>New Zealand Foreign Affairs Review</i> |
| <i>NZFPS&D</i> | Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <i>New Zealand Foreign Policy Statements and Documents 1943-1957</i> , Wellington: Government Printer, 1972. |
| NZHCAus | New Zealand High Commission[er], Australia |
| NZIHA | New Zealand Institute of International Affairs |
| <i>NZIR</i> | <i>New Zealand International Review</i> |
| <i>NZJH</i> | <i>New Zealand Journal of History</i> |
| NZLeg | New Zealand Legation |
| NZLP | New Zealand Labour Party |
| <i>NZPD</i> | <i>New Zealand Parliamentary Debates</i> |
| NZPDUN | New Zealand Permanent Delegation, United Nations |
| NZPRUN | New Zealand Permanent Representative, United Nations |
| PLA | People's Liberation Army (PRC) |
| PM | Prime Minister's Department |
| PMM | Prime Minister's Meeting |

| | |
|----------|--|
| PRC | People's Republic of China |
| RAF | Royal Air Force (United Kingdom) |
| Rep | Representative |
| SEATO | South East Asia Treaty Organisation |
| SecEA | Secretary of External Affairs (New Zealand) |
| SSCR | Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations |
| SSDA | Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UKHCWell | United Kingdom High Commissioner to New Zealand, Wellington |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNC | United Nations Command (Korean War) |
| US | United States of America |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |
| Wash | Washington |
| Well | Wellington |

Introduction

Historians have written relatively little on New Zealand-China relations in the period between 1945 and 1957. Yet there were great changes during this time, with civil war in China leading to the defeat of the Kuomintang-Nationalist Government in 1949, and the advent of a Communist Government in Peking by October 1949. From this point China policy was dominated by the question of whether or not the newly acquired authority of the Communists in China should be diplomatically recognised. This thesis examines the development of official attitudes to both sides in China during and after the civil war. It analyses the perceptions and pressures that shaped policy, including images of Nationalist and Communist Chinese groups, how these images were formulated, and New Zealand's views of wider international developments, particularly in the Cold War. The role of internal New Zealand political pressures and the possible impact of the change in government from Labour to National in 1949 are also discussed.

The official attitude to the recognition issue and indeed to the question of Communist China's admission to the UN was, in the main, one of negativity. This was seen in the adoption of the non-recognition approach during 1949 and thereafter. Once this policy was established there was little movement in the position. Thus the central question of this thesis is why the non-recognition policy was established and then maintained. The existing body of work on New Zealand China policy in the 1940s and 1950s is comparatively small. When historians have ventured into this subject area it has usually been part of a larger study and there is little specialised research into post-war China policy. The studies of R.G. Shuker and David McCraw are the exception.¹

¹ D.J. McCraw, 'Objectives and Priorities in New Zealand's Foreign Policy in Asia 1949-75: A Study of the issue of Recognition of the People's Republic of China and of Security Policies in Southeast Asia', Ph.D thesis, University of Otago, 1978; R.G. Shuker, 'New

To a considerable degree the existing historiography has emphasised the influence of New Zealand's allies particularly concern for the American perspective- as being the critical factor in the formation of the non-recognition position. This argument maintains that New Zealand did not recognise during this period because American policy was strongly against recognition. Shuker, in illustrating this historiographical emphasis, stated that on the larger issues New Zealand had "parallel thinking"² with the US. He also said that

New Zealand, acutely aware of American susceptibilities on the matter and increasingly worried about the security threat Peking posed to South-east Asia and the Pacific, took up a position firmly in line with Washington's attitude. With her involvement in the American alliance, New Zealand's China policy was more strongly linked to the United States policies toward [Communist China]. This was evident in the Government's non-recognition of [Communist China].³

David McCraw argued that New Zealand was increasingly taking on US views and that this was a common factor in both the Labour and National Governments.⁴ To McCraw the primary motive for not recognising in 1949 and 1950 was to acquire, then strengthen, the US relationship.⁵ In this regard, Stenson's conclusion that membership of ANZUS meant non-recognition of China would seem apt.⁶ Similarly the spectre of China working in New Zealand's favour in developing a security relationship with the US was noted

Zealand Policy and Attitudes toward Communist China, A study in the Evolution and Influence of the American Alliance', MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1971.

² Shuker, p. 199.

³ Shuker, p. 198.

⁴ McCraw, pp. 1-48.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Michael Stenson, 'The Origins and Significance of 'Forward Defence' in Asia', in A.D., McIntosh *et al New Zealand in World Affairs Vol. 1.*, Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1977, p. 187.

by F.L.W. Wood.⁷ McCraw lists other reasons for non-recognition including the desire not to abandon the Chinese Nationalists, a wartime ally, the need to preserve what remained of non-Communist Asia, and the fact that New Zealand had few interests to protect in China with recognition.⁸

The American factor is also apparent in the statements of other historians. Ian McGibbon has noted that cognisance of American pre-eminence in the Pacific highlighted and focussed Wellington's view of the recognition issue, and that immediate recognition was not New Zealand's "instinct".⁹ Like McCraw, McGibbon relies upon the "extreme case"¹⁰ made against recognition at Canberra in 1949 as evidence of the negative official attitude.¹¹ McGibbon also identified a domestic element in terms of the election of 1949 where the Labour Government did not want to act before it, and the successful National Government could not after.¹² Latterly, McGibbon noted the importance of the Korean War in the continued maintenance of the non-recognition policy.¹³ Richard Kennaway put forward the view that American influence was central in the desire to continually postpone a decision on recognition and UN admission.¹⁴ He commented as well upon the behaviour of the Peking regime itself, citing its involvement in international disputes and a recalcitrant attitude

⁷ F.L.W., Wood, 'New Zealand Foreign Policy 1945-51', in A.D., McIntosh op. cit., pp. 104-113; see also David McLean, 'ANZUS Origins: A Reassessment', in *Australian Historical Studies*, 24:94 (1990), pp. 66-67.

⁸ McCraw, pp. 1-48.

⁹ Ian McGibbon, *New Zealand and the Korean War, Volume 1: Politics and Diplomacy*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, p. 41,.

¹⁰ Far East Talks in Canberra, 10 November 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1a.

¹¹ McGibbon, p. 41; McCraw, pp. 1-48. For the New Zealand argument at Canberra in November in 1949 see Chapter Two of this thesis.

¹² McGibbon, pp. 41-42; see also Malcolm McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy: New Zealand in the World Since 1935*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993, p. 118.

¹³ McGibbon, pp. 42-43.

¹⁴ Richard Kennaway, *New Zealand Foreign policy: 1951-1971*, Christchurch: Hicks Smith & Sons, 1972, pp. 2, 8, 62-68.

over Taiwan as further factors.¹⁵ Similarly Malcolm McKinnon, Bruce Brown, and Ann Trotter have all intimated that New Zealand felt a need to tread carefully in regard to the US on the recognition issue, because a favourable disposition on recognition was seen as being prejudicial to its future interests and security.¹⁶

While agreeing that the desire to acquire and strengthen the alliance with the US was important, this thesis argues that there were other influences acting upon the formation of the non-recognition approach. These include the role of events like the Korean War or the Offshore Islands dispute; questions of approach like conciliation and dialogue versus anti-appeasement arguments which favoured confrontation; the perception of divisible versus monolithic Sino-Soviet Communism; the fact that New Zealand had few direct interests in China to protect with recognition; and the importance of personalities in the framing of New Zealand policy like Peter Fraser, Clifton Webb, and Sidney Holland.

This thesis argues that concern for the American perspective is the critical determinant in non-recognition later in the period, particularly after the ANZUS Treaty was concluded in 1951. It is also argued that the vital aspect in the establishment of non-recognition in 1949 and 1950 was the personality factor, particularly the 'moral practicality' which Peter Fraser brought to China policy. Fraser disapproved of the Communists ascendancy by force and believed that recognition would appease Communist aggression and encourage further expansion. Thus recognition was not only morally wrong, it was also a bad policy option. The influence of each of the reasons tends to change throughout the 12 year period. However, none stood alone, and it is

¹⁵ Kennaway, pp. 62-68.

¹⁶ Bruce Brown, *New Zealand Foreign Policy in Retrospect (1947-54 and the 1960s)*, Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1970, pp. 11-17; McKinnon, op. cit., p. 118, 'From ANZUS to SEATO', in A.D., McIntosh op. cit., pp. 37-89; Ann Trotter, 'New Zealand in World Affairs: Sir Carl Berendsen in Washington 1944-1952', *International History Review*, 12:3 (1990), pp. 479-480; see also Ian McGibbon, 'The Defence of New Zealand 1943-57', in A.D., McIntosh op. cit., p. 159.

the acknowledgment of their interdependence which is vital in understanding why non-recognition was the favoured approach between 1945 and 1957.

One particular modification to the existing historiography this thesis proposes concerns Shuker's suggestion that the Canberra meeting of November 1949 demonstrated that New Zealand favoured recognition in 1949.¹⁷ Shuker's assertion is supported by Australian secondary references', one of which claims that the meeting unanimously recommended early recognition.¹⁸ As will be demonstrated in Chapter Two of this thesis, New Zealand made a case very much against recognition at that meeting.

The first chapter, spanning the period between 1945 and 1948, looks at New Zealand's post-war perceptions and attitudes toward China. This is a period which includes the Chinese Civil War and importance is also placed on the perception of China in the aftermath of the Second World War. China was not exactly New Zealand's closest ally at the end of the war and the chapter explores how New Zealand moved away from regarding China as an ally to a more sinister perception due to events within China itself. Thus in New Zealand there was a developing threat perception in this era which linked Chinese Communism with international Communist aggression and expansion. The chapter establishes many of the perception and attitudes which would be incorporated as influences in the formation of the approach toward China questions in later periods. The initial response of New Zealand to the development of a Chinese Communist Government is the basis of the subject matter for Chapter Two. Here the focus is on how the non-recognition policy was established during 1949 and an analysis of the key reasons for the adoption of this approach. Similarly, Chapter Three is concerned with showing how and why this position was maintained by the new National Government during its first term in office. Chapter Four then examines

¹⁷ Shuker, p. 41.

¹⁸ H.S. Albinski, *Australian Attitudes and Policies Towards China*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965, pp 27, 33; J.W. Burton, *The Alternative*, Sydney: Morgans Publications, 1954, p. 90.

National's apparent reconsideration of the recognition question between 1951 and 1954. The last period under consideration runs from 1954 until 1957, and discusses how and why the National Government strongly reconfirmed the negative position in its second term.

Chapter One

1945-1948

Post-war Perceptions and Attitudes

This Chapter will trace an evolution in China policy between 1945 and 1948 away from regarding China as an ally. It will analyse perceptions of, and attitudes toward, China during a period of great change within that country. The contention is that the evolution of New Zealand policy was incremental, was shaped by a number of inter-dependent factors and was occurring well in advance of October 1949. Following an introductory section, the chapter has three sections. The first looks at New Zealand perceptions and attitudes toward China in immigration policy. The second section explores some of the ambivalent feelings felt toward both 'sides' in China during this period. For example, it looks at some of the official criticism of the Nationalist regime, while also exploring some of the more complimentary views of the Communists. The third section discusses how existing threat perceptions of Asia became linked, with developments in China, to notions of Communist expansion and aggression, a process in which the 'yellow peril' was crossed with the 'red menace'.

New Zealand attitudes toward China in the immediate post-war years betray an inherent ambivalence. A generally favourable perception of China as New Zealand's wartime ally can be contrasted with an unease and mistrust of Asian nations in general. This was the product of New Zealand's ideological detachment from its geographical location in the Asia/Pacific region. It was based on an underlying attitude of racial superiority over Asians expressed in characterisations of Asian nations and peoples as "inscrutable", "untrustworthy" and "corrupt".¹ During the post-war period, New Zealand's

¹ McGibbon, *Korean War*, p. 16, McGibbon is referring in particular to perceptions of the Chinese people in this case.

attachment to Europe and Empire receded to a degree.² This developing independence was in part induced by a growing “Pacific awareness”³ and by a pragmatic appreciation of the political reality of a weakened Britain in the post-war environment.

The greater awareness of New Zealand security needs in its own region enhanced existing Asian threat perceptions and this was exacerbated by developments in China. As news of the Chinese Civil War filtered back to New Zealand between 1945 and 1948 the perception of a threat from China grew. This perception viewed as insidious the linking of China to the USSR and the international Communist movement. New Zealand’s reservations about the Chinese Communists increased as Western relations with the Soviet Union got worse, and as its overseas sources of information emphasised USSR-Communist Chinese links.

While at the conclusion of the Second World War most New Zealand observers still considered Japan to be the principal threat, there was also a perception that China could become dangerous. A paper on “Post-War Security”, prepared in the Prime Minister’s Department, acknowledged “the possibility that China, which is now developing industrially, may cause some difficulty if she is not afforded access on an equal basis to the markets of the world...”⁴

² See Brown, *Foreign Policy in Retrospect*, pp. 1-10; McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy*, p. 11; W. David McIntyre, ‘From Dual Dependency to Nuclear Free’, in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd Edition, Geoffrey W. Rice, (ed.), Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 520-538; *Background to the ANZUS Pact: Policy-Making, Strategy and Diplomacy, 1945-55*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 1995, pp. 64-65, 96-201; Trotter, pp. 466-481.

³ Bernard K. Gordon, *New Zealand Becomes a Pacific Power*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960, p. 201.

⁴ Paper on Post-War Security, War Cabinet Secretariat, PM Department, January 1944, *DNZER Vol I, The Australia-New Zealand Agreement 1944*, Wellington: Historical Publications Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Government Printer, 1972, p. 59.

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES MANIFESTED IN IMMIGRATION POLICY

Attitudes of fear and mistrust of the Chinese race in New Zealand, first established when Chinese came to this country in the 1860s to mine gold, still existed after the Second World War. These attitudes had been officially endorsed in legislation which institutionalised a restrictive and racially discriminatory immigration policy, aimed specifically at Chinese aliens.⁵ In the main these restrictive, racially selective devices were designed to meet a hypothetical danger of a large influx of Chinese immigrants. The Department of External Affairs articulated this fear in commenting on the entry restrictions imposed on prospective Chinese immigrants in 1944:

The main reason why the restriction has been so rigidly maintained is that the granting of even one permit would be construed by the Chinese as a precedent entitling all to the same treatment, and the admission of a number of women, many of whom would be of child bearing age, would result in a considerable eventual increase in the Chinese population of the Dominion.⁶

Official treatment of Chinese had moderated recently. The Labour Government included Chinese within the scope of New Zealand's developing

⁵ The first restrictive act, the **Chinese Immigrants Restrictive Act 1881**, placed a poll tax of 10 pounds per head on all Chinese entering New Zealand, and restricted the number brought in on any one ship to one per 100 tons of cargo. The **1907 Chinese Immigration Amendment Act**, further extended a language test first introduced in legislation of 1899. The **Immigration Restriction Act 1920** retained the poll tax and made as a requirement for all non-British people to get individual permits to immigrate; these could be refused without reason by the Minister of Customs. Between 1926 and 1946 no permits for permanent residence were granted to the Chinese. See Sean Brawley, 'No White Policy in New Zealand': Fact and Fiction in New Zealand's Asian Immigration Record, 1946-1978', *NZJH*, 27:1 (1993), pp. 16-36; *The White Peril: Foreign Relations and Asian Immigration to Australasia and North America 1919-78*, Sydney: University of New South Wales, 1995; Manying Ip, *Dragons on the Long White Cloud: The Making of Chinese New Zealanders*, Auckland: Tandem Press, 1996; P. S. O'Connor, 'Keeping New Zealand White, 1908-1920', *NZJH*, 2:1 (1968), pp. 41-65; R.G. Shuker, 'New Zealand Policy and Attitudes Toward Communist China, A Study in the Evolution and Influence of the American Alliance', MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1971 pp. 2-5; S.S. Rachagan, 'Asian Immigration to New Zealand: A Study of Attitudes and Legislation', MA thesis, University of Otago, 1972; and Statistics New Zealand, *Asian New Zealanders*, Wellington: Statistics New Zealand, 1995, pp. 1-11.

⁶ Immigration of Aliens into New Zealand, DEA Memorandum, January 1944, NA: PM 32/3/1 Part 2.

welfare state.⁷ It also removed the poll tax and tonnage restrictions. Nevertheless, the attitudinal change on the part of New Zealand authorities was not great. A Customs Department report in December 1945, described the “Immigration Restriction Policy”⁸ to be followed during 1946. There was no change in the policies which had been followed in the past: “For many years now it has been the general practice not to grant permits authorising Chinese to enter New Zealand as permanent residents.”⁹ Chinese were no longer specifically selected for racial discrimination, but would be subject to the same type of racial discrimination as other non-Europeans. In practice prospective Chinese migrants failed the same restrictions on entry as other non-European aliens.¹⁰

New Zealand expected criticism from the Chinese for its immigration policies but this really did not eventuate. There was, however, at least one instance of Chinese complaint through diplomatic channels. In March 1949 the Nationalists were negotiating with External Affairs for a Treaty of Friendship and in the course of negotiations asked New Zealand to adopt a less discriminatory policy toward Chinese immigration.¹¹ One reason that New Zealand largely evaded Chinese criticism of its immigration policies was that it had no representatives of its own within China to be questioned and examined. The Government was also shielded by the fact that it had never been a particularly open advocate of exclusionism. This worked well considering Australia took quite the opposite approach to New Zealand’s

⁷ Rachagan, p. 284; and Shuker, pp. 4-5.

⁸ Immigration Restriction Policy to be Followed During 1946, Customs Department Report, 18 December 1945, NA: PM 32/3/1 Part 4.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Shuker, p. 5.

¹¹ Internal DEA Memorandum: Wilson to McIntosh, 2 March 1949, NA: PM 58/94/1 Part 1.

low-key stance and “New Zealand was happy to push its antipodean neighbour further into the limelight”.¹²

The approach was further refined in the 1950s. When the subject was broached in international forums, the New Zealand Government directive was to state that “no statutory provision” existed which specifically restricted entry into New Zealand on a basis of “race, religion or nationality”.¹³ Strictly speaking, the legislative devices for Asian immigration exclusion had been removed, but the policy and attitudes behind exclusionism remained in place and were still universally applicable. New Zealand’s immigration policy was,

inevitably discriminatory against Asians - indeed against all persons who are not wholly of European race and colour. Whereas we have done much to *encourage* immigration from Europe, we do everything to *discourage* it from Asia.¹⁴

Immigration policy as applied to the Chinese race by the Labour Government can be seen as a practical application of inherent attitudes and perceptions within official and unofficial reaches of New Zealand society. This institutionalised form of racism was intended to preserve a European system of social, economic, and political development in New Zealand. Such an attitude had little to do with ideological preferences for ‘Communist’ or ‘Nationalist’ Chinese.

MIXED FEELINGS

There were some mixed feelings towards the government of Nationalist China during this period. The attitude can be seen in New Zealand’s reaction to the

¹² Brawley, *White Peril*, p. 264.

¹³ Memorandum by the New Zealand Government to the Inter-Governmental Committee on European Migration, Geneva 1953, NA: PM 108/34/1 Part 10.

¹⁴ Immigration into New Zealand: International Problems, DEA Memorandum, 1953, NA: PM 323/3/18 Part 1.

Cairo Declaration of 1 December 1943¹⁵ The Cairo Conference 22-26 November 1943 was a summit meeting involving the British Prime Minister Churchill, the American President Roosevelt, and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. The subsequent Declaration dealt with war aims in the Asia/Pacific region. These included the unconditional surrender of Japan and the disposition of territories which the allies believed Japan had stolen from the Chinese, including Manchuria, Formosa, and the Pescadore Islands. The distribution of these territories was to follow the completion of victory over the Japanese in the Pacific theatre.

New Zealand's reaction to the Cairo Declaration was dominated by indignation at the lack of regard of the views of the antipodean dominions. New Zealand felt that the Conference "could not discuss the claims of other nations in the absence of their representatives".¹⁶ However, enmeshed in New Zealand's objection was a certain ambivalence towards China. There were, for instance, suggestions that China had been given too much at Cairo. The decision to accord China great power status with a permanent seat on the UN Security Council was also questioned, particularly when the leadership of the country was still to be determined in the outcome of the Civil War. Finally, there was a suggestion that China's increased involvement in post-war territory and security deliberations was not commensurate with her role in the outcome of the Pacific War.

This accusation was emphasised by James Bertram¹⁷ in a situation report on China during the Civil War. Bertram had been a foreign correspondent in

¹⁵ The Cairo Declaration: Statement Released by Roosevelt, Chiang Kai-shek and Churchill, 1 December 1943, *DNZER*, Vol II, p. 3; The Cairo Conference 1943, NA: NP, Folio 139 (not dated).

¹⁶ File Note, 2 December 1943, NA: PM 101/2/5 Part 1; MinEA to NZHCAus, 8 February 1944, NA: PM 111/3/4 Part 1; and Eugene, P. Chase, 'Peter Fraser at San Francisco', *Political Science*, 11:1 (1959), p. 19.

¹⁷ Bertram, James Munro, foreign correspondent of the *Daily Mail* and *Manchester Guardian* in China, 1938-39; acting press attache, British Embassy, Chungking, 1941; adviser to the NZ delegation to the FEC in Jan-Feb 1946; Professor of English, Victoria University Wellington, 1947-76. Bertram was a key figure in the establishment of the New Zealand-China Friendship Society, which grew from local bodies established in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch

China before the Second World War and a press attache in the British Embassy, Chungking, during the war. He was something of a rarity in New Zealand during this era, an expert on China who had spent long periods of time observing Chinese politics and administration. In this capacity Bertram accompanied the New Zealand delegation to the Far Eastern Commission to Japan and was asked by the Department of External Affairs to prepare a series of reports on the situation in the Far East. Like many figures on the Left in academia and politics at this time, Bertram was sympathetic toward the Communist side in the Chinese Civil War¹⁸ and he tended to paint a more favourable picture of the Communist forces in comparison with those of the Nationalist Government.

Bertram encapsulated the New Zealand view on China by asserting that Nationalist China emerged from the war “with greater material gains than any other belligerent”¹⁹. Bertram also described the National Chinese Government as “largely a passenger during the last years of the war”²⁰ and he asserted that from the Pearl Harbour attack onwards the Kuomintang leadership regarded the defeat of the Japanese as primarily a US and British Commonwealth task. He believed that the Nationalists preferred to concentrate their efforts on preparing “for the showdown with the internal [Communist] opposition”.²¹

around 1952. The national body did not hold its first conference until 1958. The Society sought to promote the idea of New Zealand recognition of the Communist Government in China and emphasised a potential for trade relations between the two nations in many submissions to the Government. These appear, somewhat irregularly, in the files but appear to have little influence on policy, see Letter: NZ-China Friendship Society to the Secretary, National Party, ‘Why China Matters to Us’, 21 September 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10; NZ-China Friendship Society to NZ Prime Minister, 9 May 1955, NZ Prime Minister reply, 19 September 1955, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 11.

¹⁸ Shuker, pp. 9-16.

¹⁹ The Situation in China: A Report on the Situation in China by J.M. Bertram 1946, 22 March 1946, NA: PM 264/1/10 Part 1.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid; Ann Trotter, *The Continuing Revolution: China Since 1894*, Wellington: Hicks Smith & Sons, 1975, pp. 37-38.

Bertram's view of the Chinese Communists efforts is more complimentary and somewhat portentous:

It should be emphasised again that throughout the whole course of the Far Eastern War, these Communist-led Chinese forces, who have a quite remarkable fighting record, have received no military supplies whatever from any government - Chungking, Moscow or Washington. All that they achieved was by their own unaided efforts, and undoubtedly this has given them greatly increased confidence and morale by contrast with the Chungking leadership whose achievement was decidedly unimpressive in view of the considerable technical support and equipment they were receiving from the allies.²²

In 1944 Fraser said that he agreed with the recognition of China as one of the world's leading powers along with the US, the USSR, and Great Britain. It would appear this evaluation was based upon Chinese potentialities and a pragmatic interpretation of international relations in the post-war environment: "While China cannot at present be designated as a great military power, she is destined to be a great nation. She has fought longest and hardest, and is entitled to all help and support the United Nations can extend to her".²³ Fraser's views, however, were not unanimously accepted in Parliament between 1945 and 1948 and China's international status was repeatedly questioned, not least because of the Nationalist Government's increasingly precarious position in the Civil War. For example, the Minister of Labour Angus McLagan said in 1945 that while China had a permanent seat on the Security Council it was the "big three", Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States, that were the "dominant group".²⁴ This claim was reinforced by later speakers emphasising that in the United Nations it was

²² The Situation in China: A Report on the Situation in China by J.M. Bertram 1946, 22 March 1946, NA: PM 264/1/10 Part 1.

²³ *NZPD*, 265, (1944), p. 70.

²⁴ *NZPD*, 268, (1945), p. 707.

really only the attitudes and opinions of the three major players that counted and would carry influence.²⁵

Despite the growing view that the Nationalists were losing ground to the Communists in the Civil War, there were some aspects of the conduct of Chinese foreign policy and statements of Nationalists officials that were reassuring. Throughout this period Chiang Kai-shek was in the main conciliatory toward the West. He continually emphasised that the China he represented lacked territorial ambition.²⁶

Chiang Kai-shek also stressed that Nationalist China placed great significance on the adoption of a system of universal collective security, and therefore on the extension of United Nations power.²⁷ Certainly there was common ground on this with the New Zealand Government. There was also a perception that New Zealand and China would have a mutual fear of a resurgent, aggressive Japan. Although Nationalist China did not advocate a harsh peace settlement, it believed its interests would be best served through the incorporation of Japan into the Western alliance system.

While Chiang Kai-shek sought to reassure the West with a conciliatory attitude, he appeared to show a lack of conciliation in domestic relations with the Communists.²⁸ This was the view of the External Affairs Committee in October 1947. The Committee was established by Parliament to examine external and Commonwealth affairs referred to it by the House or Government. It was in part a response to Opposition calls for a widening of

²⁵ NZPD, 273, (1946), p. 590, (Oram), 276, (1947), p. 143, (Paul), p. 290, (Moohan), pp. 298-299, (Wilson), p. 313, 277, (1947), p. 87, 280, (1948), p. 1.

²⁶ *Evening Post*, 22 June 1944; *Dominion*, 25 March 1946; File Despatch from Australian Representative in Nanking, 3 June 1947, Note for the SecEA, 19 April 1948, NA: PM 264/4/1 Part 1b.

²⁷ Note for SecEA, 19 April 1948, NA: PM 264/4/1 Part 1b.

²⁸ Master Set of External Affairs Committee Documents, 16 October 1947, NA: PM 56/2/5 Part 1.

the decision-making process in foreign policy, and an attempt to get bipartisan agreement on vital foreign policy issues.²⁹

The Committee's perception of Chiang was that he was growing impatient with the Communists and with the mediative process in general. The Committee formed this opinion in 1947 after the cease-fire of 1946 had failed and hostilities were resuming more intensely than before. The Committee believed that Chiang was in great trouble in 1947, militarily, politically, and administratively. One of the major points on which the mediation process had stalled in 1946 was Nationalist insistence upon the observance of their authority in areas which the Communists held. By 1947 the Nationalists were no longer in a position to make such demands. The official New Zealand perception of the Nationalists at this time was of a regime in serious decline, losing ground in a Civil War which it was unlikely to win decisively enough to maintain effective administrative control over all of China. It was suggested that Chiang and the Nationalists were playing for time and desperately trying to reinforce their position with dwindling American aid and support.³⁰

External Affairs perceived the Chinese Government as adopting a middle-of-the-road policy during this immediate post-war period with regard to relations with the major Cold War protagonists - the USSR and the US. It was felt the Nationalists did not want an extension of the Cold War to Asia and South East Asia. External Affairs was of the view that the importance of American assistance to the Nationalists would be magnified if Asia and South East Asia did become a Cold War flashpoint. This support would determine to a significant degree whether the Nationalists could hold their positions in vital regions like Manchuria. The view of Alister McIntosh Secretary of External Affairs, was that the Nationalists had secured "substantial aid from America

²⁹ For the beginnings of the External Affairs Committee and which Members of Parliament were included see, *NZPD*, 278, (1947), p. 479, (Fraser); *AJHR*, 1948, (S.2), A-1.

³⁰ Master Set of External Affairs Committee Documents, 16 October 1947, NA: PM 56/2/5 Part 1.

without making political reforms to the extent which America would probably have desired".³¹

The attitude of External Affairs towards the Chinese Communists was not entirely negative in this period. There was even a suggestion that the increasing success of the Communists in the Civil War could be viewed as no more dangerous than a Nationalist victory:

We have, therefore, to consider whether it is really in our interests that Communist movements, such as that in China, should be suppressed leaving victorious a nationalism which through the ineptitudes of its internal policy might in time be tempted to foreign ventures in order to preserve the morale of its people.³²

The view that the increasing success of the Communists was due to the corruption and inefficiency of the Nationalist regime was mirrored in the belief that the Communists were more astute.³³ The External Affairs Committee believed that the Communists had popular support in northern China and this influence was beginning to spread to other parts of the country. This growing popularity was said to be due to the willingness to make changes. It was believed the Communists' reform schedule was creating a sense of confidence among Chinese people that a Communist government could be more interested in their economic and social welfare.

External Affairs had considerable information on the relative strengths and weaknesses of both combatants in the Chinese Civil War. It felt that the Nationalist side from 1945 onwards had critically underestimated the strength of the Communist armed forces. New Zealand authorities were receiving information by the end of 1947 which indicated that the Communists had a far

³¹ SecEA to Secretary, NZLegWash, 1 May 1947, NA: PM 102/9/4 Part 1.

³² File Note: New Zealand's Relations with Asiatic Countries, 28 February 1947, NA: PM 32/3/1 Part 4; File Note: Relations with Asiatic Countries, 13 March 1947, NA: PM 58/94/1 Part 1.

³³ File Note: Asian Relations, 1 October 1948, NA: PM 58/94/1 Part 1.

better trained and equipped fighting force than had previously been thought. Conversely the Nationalist forces were thought to be wanting in terms of training, equipment, and morale.

The notion that the Communists would eventually be successful in the Civil War was reinforced by favourable descriptions of social conditions in the areas of China the Communists already held. By the middle of 1948 high levels of political autonomy were believed to exist in the villages and townships of these regions. The Communist movement supposedly had the full support of the local peasantry. This had apparently even extended to volunteering for Communist forces and it was felt these regions would not be averse to a system of conscription. The people of these areas had desired land reform and this had been granted under Communist control systems. The general impression External Affairs was taking from these reports was that the average Chinese citizen preferred the Communists.

THE 'RED MENACE' CROSSED WITH THE 'YELLOW PERIL'

After the Second World War there was a general perception that New Zealand was in no danger of direct physical attack because there was no power hostile to it capable at controlling Pacific sea communications, and mounting an offensive upon New Zealand shores. However, there was a perception that Asia could well pose a danger in the medium to long term. Frank Corner³⁴ predicted that an Asian threat could emerge up to a generation after the Second World War, when Asian nations such as China increased their collective economic, industrial, and military power. The Asian nations could then possess sufficient air and sea capabilities to pose a significant security threat. Accordingly Corner maintained that it would be in New Zealand's interests to strengthen relations with the United States as a buffer

³⁴ Corner, Frank Henry, served in the DEA from 1943; First Secretary to the NZEmb, Wash, 1948-51; Counsellor, NZHC, London, 1952-58; Deputy-Secretary, DEA, 1958-62; NZPRUN (Ambassador), 1962-67; AmbUS, 1967-72; Secretary of Foreign Affairs, 1972-79.

to perceived Asian expansion and that New Zealand should expand its diplomatic representation into Asia.³⁵

Reservations about the Chinese Communists increased as Western relations with the Soviet Union worsened, and as New Zealand's overseas sources emphasised the increasing USSR-Communist China links. 'Asia' was already seen as a long-term threat, and had historically been viewed as 'the enemy', principally in the form of Japan. China was formerly a minor part of the monolithic threat emanating from Asia. However, the Communists' increasing success between 1945 and 1948 gradually saw China assume greater significance in New Zealand defence thinking, particularly as many sought to emphasise the link between Chinese and Soviet Communism.

Anti-Communism was very strong in New Zealand in the late 1940s, on both sides of the House.³⁶ Furthermore post-war Asia was seen as a breeding ground for Communist expansion, given its low standard of living, its massed population and associated political, economic, and social instability. One MP declared that "Fertile soil for the seeds of Communism is to be found in a country where there is poverty and starvation".³⁷ Another parliamentarian commented that the "whole of the East Indies and Asia [was in a] ferment".³⁸ There was the suggestion that the new-found freedom resulting from Allied victory had awoken ideological and social feelings in South East Asian nations that had been repressed under the Japanese. Therefore, Asia was perceived to be ripe for the "tactics" of Communism: "infiltration and subversion, treachery

³⁵ Memorandum by Frank Corner: Collective Security and Regional Pacts, 'Frank Corner', July 1948, in Malcolm Templeton, (ed.), *An Eye An Ear And A Voice: 50 Years in New Zealand's External Relations 1943-1993*, Wellington: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1993, pp. 121-122.

³⁶ NZPD, 274, (1946), p. 687, (Harker), 276, (1947), p. 198, (Skinner), p. 241, (MacFarlane), p. 405, (Bodkin), pp. 415-416, (Semple), p. 457 & p. 542, (McIntyre), 280, (1948), p. 329, (Holland).

³⁷ NZPD, 280, (1948), p. 621, (Walls).

³⁸ NZPD, 276, (1947), p. 319, (Waite).

and terrorism. Those are the methods that Communism uses to fight its war".³⁹

The coalescent perception of the 'red menace' and the 'yellow peril' served to confirm the popular identification of Asia as a major potential threat in this period. Sidney Holland, Leader of the Opposition, spoke in Parliament in July 1948 about "the recent tide of totalitarian Communism".⁴⁰ His comments linked China to the USSR and therefore Communism:

coming nearer to home we can find Communist influence spreading by leaps and bounds; in the last three years there has been intermittent war in China, Indo-China, and Indonesia, and there have been recent and new disorders and outbreaks of violence.. due to communist infiltration.. these new developments will place a new strain on Western nations. Today we find that the whole of Manchuria is in communist hands at this moment. We find Chinese Central Government deteriorating from day to day.⁴¹

Holland went on to comment on the declining standard of living in China. His emphasis was on the continuing downward trend of the Chinese currency, claiming that in the 1930s it took 3 to 4 Shanghai 'dollars' to equal 1 US dollar; whereas by July 1948 1,400,000 Shanghai 'dollars' were equal to 1 US dollar. This reinforced the view that Asian post-war living standards had plunged to such precariously low levels that "any change [appeared] attractive".⁴² Holland and others in Parliament felt that such a change in the circumstances of 1948 would be towards Communism.

The process of linking China to the worldwide threat perception of Soviet-led Communism continued in Parliament later in 1948. Tom Bloodworth, a

³⁹ *NZPD*, 280, (1948), p. 411, (Doidge).

⁴⁰ *NZPD*, 280, (1948), p. 329.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

Labour Legislative Councillor, spoke of the “spectre of Communism”⁴³ and saw no end to the potential of its expansion. The expansive nature of the “Russian Communist Empire”⁴⁴ and the vulnerability of the northern parts of China, Manchuria and Northern Korea to that Empire was highlighted by the prominent National MP Keith Holyoake: “Altogether two hundred and forty million people have been added to the empire of Russian Communism in the past three years, so we see Russian Communism as a colossus astride the whole of Western Europe and a good deal of Asia”.⁴⁵

External Affairs received information that confirmed the threat perceptions outlined within Parliament. In December 1947 it was reported by Western press sources in Nanking that the USSR and the Chinese Communists had signed an agreement that provided for Russian technical assistance in both military and economic fields. This was in addition to the training of eleven divisions equipped by the Russians. These troops were to be used to expedite the formation of a new Republic of China, under Communist direction.⁴⁶ Once the Communists’ victory over the Nationalists was complete, the Russians were supposedly to share in Chinese mineral resources and participate in the establishment of a ‘Chinese-Russian Trading Corporation’. This organisation was to move to evict US and Western influence from China.⁴⁷

Military and economic ties were not the only links between the Chinese Communists and the USSR. There was also an increasing perception in the West that the two were coming closer together ideologically. British sources claimed in August 1948 that the Chinese Communist Party was subservient to the Soviet Government. This view was based on the observation that in June

⁴³ Ibid, p. 687.

⁴⁴ *NZPD*, 280, (1948), p. 712.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ The reports coming from the *Overseas Chinese Daily News*, File Despatch, 17 December 1947, NA: PM 264/3/5 Part 1; *Southern Cross*, 5 April 1949.

⁴⁷ File Despatch, 17 December 1947, NA: PM 264/3/5 Part 1.

1948 the CCP had “obediently issued a denunciation of Marshal Tito and [the] Yugoslav Communist Party”.⁴⁸ External Affairs was convinced that the CCP would adhere rigidly to Communist ideology. Little credence was given to views that Mao and his cohorts were “Chinese democrats bent on agrarian reform”⁴⁹, following the Russian line to a degree, just as the Nationalists had supposedly used the Soviets to gain power prior to the Second World War. Assessments of this nature were presented as wishful thinking. It was seen as unlikely that the Chinese Communists would be able to extricate themselves from Soviet influence after victory, if that victory had been partly due to Soviet backing.⁵⁰ Chiang Kai-shek was able to do this before World War Two because he had received Western backing; the Chinese Communists were unlikely to be granted that.

CONCLUSIONS

The relationship with China in this first stage after World War Two was somewhat distant and cautious, despite Nationalist China’s status as a wartime ally. New Zealand attitudes towards the Chinese Civil War were inherently paradoxical. The Nationalist regime was seen as a corrupt, inefficient dictatorship which had succeeded in alienating the majority of Chinese. It was also perceived as a potential long-term threat. However, it was still the acknowledged government of China and a wartime ally, although the importance of its contribution was questioned. The Communists were believed to be getting direction from Moscow and were regarded as expansionist. Yet there was a perception that Mao and his lieutenants had demonstrated an ability to cultivate genuine mass support through astute leadership and a reform programme designed to improve Chinese living standards. There was also some admiration for the campaign the Chinese Communists had waged against the Japanese during the Second World War.

⁴⁸ SSCR to UKHCWell, 17 August 1948, NA: PM 264/3/5 Part 1.

⁴⁹ Research Paper, 3 February 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1a.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Inherent threat perceptions of Asia were not a new feature of New Zealand security policy; the idea of a 'yellow peril' looming to New Zealand's north had been around for three quarters of a century. However, events in China between 1945 and 1948 led to the development of a perceived link between China, Communism and the USSR. The foreign services of Australia and Britain during this period were influential in the shaping of New Zealand perceptions and attitudes, but their communications served to reinforce an existing sense of threat from Asia. They did this through evaluations of increasing Communist success in the Chinese Civil War and allegations of close links between the Chinese Communists and the Soviet Union. During the late 1940s New Zealand moved away from regarding China as an ally, albeit not a particularly close one, to a much more sinister perception. This evolutionary process was occurring in advance of the actual Communist victory in 1949. It was believed that the Communists would be successful well before the actual victory was achieved and Communism was seen as the most dynamic force in Chinese politics and society. It was also increasingly seen as a major potential threat to New Zealand's interests.

Chapter Two

1949

Establishing the Non-recognition position

This Chapter examines the establishment of New Zealand's non-recognition approach to the Communist Chinese Government in 1949. It begins with a look at what was happening in China during this year, where the rapid pace of developments saw the Nationalist Chinese Government continue to lose ground to the Communists, militarily, economically, and politically, eventually being forced to retreat to nearby Formosa. It also looks at New Zealand's stand on recognition throughout the year and demonstrates that the negative position expressed at Canberra in November developed throughout 1949. A further section examines the recommendations on China policy forwarded to the government from its foreign policy advisers in the military and Department of External Affairs. This is followed by a discussion of what policy approach was adopted, and why.

Though there was little overt change in New Zealand's policy position throughout the year, there was a significant amount of debate within official circles. Two contradictory schools of thought developed. On the one hand, the leading belief within External Affairs and the military moved in favour of recognition of the Communist regime and some tentative cooperation with it. Conversely, Peter Fraser himself appears to have led the opposition to recognition, favouring a more confrontational approach to the new Chinese leadership. To some extent this was a clash between moral judgement and pragmatism.

The views of a major ally could be listed in support on each side of the recognition argument. The side favouring recognition, could point to the position of Britain, whereas Fraser's line was closer to that of the United States. Arguments in favour of recognition were expressed in a series of

departmental assessments and military/defence reports. The examination of Fraser's argument is somewhat more problematic, as he wrote little on the formation of policy. However, he did make a number of public statements critical of the Chinese Communists and it appears that the strong argument against recognition made by New Zealand at tripartite discussions in Canberra in November reflected the Prime Minister's views.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW ZEALAND'S STAND DURING 1949

After initial victories in North China, Chiang over-extended his forces which were not trained to deal with the Communist's guerilla tactics and by the end of 1948-early 1949, the Communists were in control in Manchuria and practically all of the north of China. The pace of developments moved quickly in 1949 as the last Nationalist stronghold, Peking, fell to the advancing Communists in February and Chiang was forced to negotiate again. Fighting had resumed by April, and in the middle of 1949 it seemed possible the Communists could cross into Hong Kong. This perceived threat to Imperial interests served to highlight the latter stages of the Chinese Civil War in New Zealand and tended to characterise the Chinese Communists as 'the other side'. In response to these developments, and a British request, New Zealand sent a Dakota transport flight to assist the RAF in Hong Kong. However, a direct clash with Communist Chinese forces was seen as unlikely and press sources suggest that the central New Zealand concern was for her Commonwealth obligation, rather than as a direct threat to New Zealand interests.¹

In Autumn 1949 Chiang was forced to retreat to Formosa. There he set about trying to engender further international support for his cause, but this was not generally forthcoming. One ally was President Quirino² of the Philippines and

¹ NZPD, 286, (1949), p. 1381, (Fraser). New Zealand also made arrangements to send 3 frigates to Hong Kong if required; *Evening Post*, 3 September 1949; *Auckland Star*, 28 October 1949.

² Quirino, Elpidio, 1890-1956, President of the Republic of the Philippines, 1948-53.

the two set about promoting a Pacific Pact to oppose Communism.³ The Chinese Nationalist Consul-General, Wang Feng, had called upon McIntosh to give the Secretary a copy of the text of the agreement between Chiang and President Quirino. Wang said that New Zealand “could not afford not to be interested”, and McIntosh’s reply was that New Zealand was in favour of a pact along the lines of NATO.⁴ He also asked the Nationalist representative if he had any information on US and UK attitudes to the proposed agreement, and said New Zealand would be guided by their collective attitudes.⁵ Interest in a Pacific Pact did see the idea receive publicity in this country⁶, but the lack of support for the concept from New Zealand’s closest allies meant Wellington did not seriously consider backing it.⁷ This can be seen in the reactions of the Department and Berendsen:

It would be idle to consider any grouping which did not include one or more of the Great Powers and specifically the United States without whom any regional pact for self-defence in the Pacific against Communism would be unreal.⁸

The proposal made by Chiang Kai-shek and Quirino can be regarded as an attempt on the part of the former to gain moral support for the tottering Kuomintang regime... A common distaste for Communism does not seem a sufficiently strong reason for our association with either; in particular we ought not to involve ourselves in the Chinese debacle.⁹

³ Cablegram: Aus Consul-General to DEA, 11 July 1949., NA: PM 111/3/3 Part 1.

⁴ File Note, 20 July 1949, NA: PM 111/3/3 Part 1.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *NZPD*, 287, (1949), p. 2061, (Aderman).

⁷ SecEA to Official Secretary, NZHCLon, 12 May 1949., MinEA to NZPDUN, 20 July 1949, NA: PM 111/3/3 Part 1; *Evening Post*, 12 August 1949.

⁸ NZPDUN to MinEA, 23 July 1949, NA: PM 111/3/3 Part 1.

⁹ Notes on Pacific Pact, for McIntosh, Reid, Shanahan, and Wilson, 27 July 1949, NA: PM 111/3/3 Part 1.

There was little official comment on developments in China during 1949 due to an amalgam of internal and external factors. It was an election year and domestic issues tended to take precedence over international affairs in government thinking, and the reporting of political issues. The Labour Government, was probably also mindful not to let the events in China and the subsequent recognition question become an election issue with the National Party trumpeting its own anti-Communist credentials. Moreover, the Labour Party itself would have struggled to come to a unified position regarding the Chinese Communists at that time.¹⁰ Finally, the attitudes of the British and United States governments towards the Chinese Communist regime appeared fluid. In this context the New Zealand Government was unlikely to make a definitive policy statement on its attitude to the Chinese Communists.

However, there was significant debate within official government circles on the implications of events in China for New Zealand. There was a realisation in Wellington that a Communist victory would have a significant impact on regional strategic considerations, and in a wider Cold War context.¹¹ Initially New Zealand's concerns were twofold. Firstly, there was anxiety about the impact of a Communist China on the power balance in the United Nations.¹² Secondly, there was perceived to be potential for trouble in the future shape of relations between China and India, a fellow Commonwealth member which was asserting a leadership role in Asia which might be challenged aggressively by an efficient and united Chinese Communist regime.¹³

There was little change in New Zealand's approach as 1949 progressed. The initial New Zealand position was that recognition of the Chinese regime, in any form, was premature¹⁴ until a government existed which was "national in

¹⁰ Shuker, pp. 26-27.

¹¹ *AJHR*, 1950 A-1, p. 19.

¹² File Note: Wilson to McIntosh, 10 January 1949, PM 58/11/1 Part 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ SecEA to UKHCWell, 25 March 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1.

character”,¹⁵ representative of the Chinese peoples. This was the predominant view in April when Wang Feng,¹⁶ the Nationalist Chinese Consul-General, enquired as to the New Zealand position¹⁷ and the New Zealand press was suggesting that India was open to recognising a Communist Chinese government.¹⁸ This was still the view in June when, in a communication to Washington, McIntosh noted the Prime Minister’s reservations about recognising a regime which was seemingly acquiring power through violent methods.¹⁹ There seemed no need for haste in consideration of the matter as New Zealand had few interests, economic, diplomatic, or political, to protect in China. However, there was agreement with the Australian view that the Communists should be encouraged toward friendliness.²⁰

In August Britain again asked for Wellington’s views on the continued recognition of the Nationalist regime and the non-recognition of the succeeding Communists, and on New Zealand’s views of the possibility of developing trading relations with the Communists. In this communication the British made a preliminary assessment of policy options and indicated their preference for recognition of the Communist regime. A condition put forward by London was that the Communists had to have established effective central authority on the mainland. Britain’s evaluation was based on its desire to safeguard its economic and commercial interests through a conciliatory disposition toward what appeared likely to be the next Chinese Government.²¹

¹⁵ Memorandum: DS to Prime Minister’s Department, 10 May 1949, Information on the Establishment of Relations with the Chinese Communists, 12 May 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1; Extract from Cable Summary (138), 31 May 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1a.

¹⁶ Wang Feng, [Nationalist] Chinese Consul-General in New Zealand, 1935-53.

¹⁷ Memorandum: Prime Minister’s Department, 29 April 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1.

¹⁸ *Dominion, Evening Post*, 27 April 1949.

¹⁹ SecEA to NZAmWash, 14 June 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1.

²⁰ File Note, 30 June 1949, NA: PM 58/11/1 Part 1; Shanahan to McIntosh, 30 June 1949, SecEA to NZHCAus, 21 July 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1.

²¹ CRO to Cecil Day, 22 August 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1a.

New Zealand's response was one of regret for Britain's apparent abandonment of a wartime ally and doubt that its approach to the matter was the correct one, feeling that the rationale for Britain's belief was weak and there was doubt "if sufficient weight has been given to the precise implications of the proposed move".²²

This position was further reaffirmed after the proclamation of the Chinese People's Republic on 1 October 1949, and towards the end of the year. Throughout September and October Wellington was cognisant of a movement toward early recognition within the Commonwealth, led mainly by India and Britain.²³ However, New Zealand remained opposed to early recognition, at least until after the general election, because it would be seen as another victory for international Communism and a rebuff to a wartime ally.²⁴ Messages sent to New Zealand representatives in London²⁵ and New York²⁶ during November also opposed recognition and New Zealand's United Kingdom High Commissioner Bill Jordan voiced Wellington's opposition at a Commonwealth consultation on the recognition question, as did McIntosh at Canberra a few days later at Canberra.

It was possible to argue for much of 1949 that the situation in China was still too fluid to make any firm decisions on relations with the Communist side. There were, in particular, doubts as to whether the Communists could really

²² MinEA to NZHCLon, 7 November 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1. Communications in later months indicate that Fraser responded on 6 September, however, this is not included in the file but there are other communications in the following months from which it is possible to get an impression of the tone of Fraser's comments, like the outward telegram which has been cited, see also SSCR to UKHCWell, 19 October 1949, NZAMWash to MinEA, 16 September 1949, DepUKHCWell to SecEA, 20 October 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1.

²³ *Evening Post*, 22 September 1949; Memorandum: NZHCAus to SecEA, 28 September 1949, SSCR to UKHCWell, 4 October 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1; *Southern Cross*, 5 & 18 October 1949.

²⁴ SecEA to NZPDUN, 7 November 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1.

²⁵ MinEA(NZ Prime Minister) to NZHCLon & DEA to NZHCAus, 7 November 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1.

²⁶ SecEA to NZPDUN, 7 November 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1.

gain effective control of what had long been a very divided country. Furthermore, New Zealand had no pressing interests in China, and neither of its major formal and informal allies, Britain and the United States, was taking a fixed position in public on its relationship with the Chinese Communist government, should one be established. However, this attitude was increasingly difficult to sustain as it became evident that such a regime was firmly established, and Britain and some other countries moved toward formal recognition of this reality.

OFFICIAL ADVICE ON RECOGNITION

Most of the Government's diplomatic and defence advisers considered that, on balance, New Zealand's interests would be best served by relatively early recognition of the new regime. They accepted the argument that recognition might well persuade Peking to be more conciliatory towards the West. Above all, they favoured the view that it might draw the Chinese Communists away from Soviet influence. This approach largely coincided with that of Britain, the historical mainstay of New Zealand's economic and defence policies, and a country with which most New Zealanders identified. However, this favourable position was not completely universal among the government's advisers as there were those who had misgivings about a recommendation for early recognition. Among other reasons those who questioned the favourable line on recognition emphasised concern for the American perspective and this should be seen as a contributory factor in the policy approach which was ultimately determined by Fraser.

Those promoting early recognition felt that the Communists were, by the latter stages of 1949, clearly in control of the mainland and appeared to have strong popular support.²⁷ They also believed that the Communists might respond positively to a conciliatory approach, and that these positive

²⁷ NZHCLon to MinEA(NZ Prime Minister), 16 November 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1a; Extract(s) from JIC meeting, 12, 18 & 23 November 1949, File Note, 18 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2.

overtures might aid in detaching them from the Soviets.²⁸ Continued contacts could also, it was felt, assist in aiding non-Communist elements and the fostering of any “incipient Titoism”.²⁹ The advocates of early recognition were also mindful of Britain’s attitude, and the consideration of British interests in China was also felt to be a determining factor. Latterly, the knowledge that other Commonwealth countries, notably India and Britain, were intending to move on recognition sooner rather than later also influenced officials in External Affairs and elsewhere.

The positive approach was presented to the Government in various forms, most notably in a series of for and against evaluations emanating from the Eastern Section of the Department of External Affairs. Generally these were inclined to recommend that early recognition was the best course. The first of these came in a departmental assessment on 6 December which concluded that the balance of the argument was more heavily weighted on the side of early recognition.³⁰ This was also the conclusion reached by the Government’s military advisers, who held that the “military advantage”³¹ lay with early recognition, and little advantage lay in deferring consideration of the matter. Strategically speaking, it was felt that a Communist Chinese Government did not represent a direct threat to New Zealand’s security while the Commonwealth retained control of sea communications. Further, it was militarily desirable that China not become a Soviet satellite, and a Western diplomatic presence there could aid in splitting the two Communist monoliths.³²

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ File Note, 6 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2.

³¹ Extract (JIC), 18 & 23 November, 12 December, 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2.

³² Ibid.

External Affairs considered that recognition was inevitable, mainly because the Communists were going to be a fixture in China for some time, and the Nationalists, short of World War Three, had little chance of re-establishing themselves other than on Formosa. Recognition did not necessarily imply approval of a regime's policies, but rather it was more an expedient measure designed for political convenience, and was justified by the Communists having fulfilled international legal and customary requirements for recognition. Arguments over *de facto* versus *de jure* recognition were also seen as academic, as Peking would only accept the latter.³³

Australian, British, and Canadian representatives in China had favoured recognition to protect their strategic and commercial interests in China and New Zealand had relied upon these officials to frame its understanding of developments in China. Non-recognition, those representatives claimed, would leave the field open to the Soviets and this could be damaging in the long term. China's links had previously been with the West and it was felt it could still use Western help and should not be forced, out of necessity, into the Soviet orbit.³⁴

Proponents of early recognition also claimed the Communists' power was based around the acquiescence of the non-political masses in China. This class had allegedly welcomed effective and non-corrupt central authority and its influence on the democratic political process would be strengthened if Western links were maintained. It would be reduced if Soviet influence grew in China.³⁵

There were, among the officials, some who had reservations or forwarded alternative approaches, concerning the recommendation for early recognition, but in the main the general thrust of the argument of the Government's

³³ File Note(s), 6,12,18 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

advisers held to a more favourable line on early recognition. It would appear that these advisers acknowledged the objections to early recognition, like the perceived US attitude and the notion of abandoning a wartime ally, but did not see them as over-riding factors justifying a deferral of the question.

Another official reservation lay in the belief that recognition could lead to the growth of Communism among Chinese residents in New Zealand and its South Pacific Island Trust territories. It was felt this tendency would exist despite the question of recognition, but could be accentuated by movement toward recognition, or act of recognition. The fear was that recognition could legitimate the methods through which the Communists seized power, and act as a fillip to Communist subversion in South East Asia and the Pacific.³⁶

Fear of Asian Communist expansion as a feature of New Zealand security objectives was addressed in a departmental paper written by R.H. (Hunter) Wade³⁷ in August 1949. Essentially, it argued that New Zealand needed to protect itself from Asian racial expansion and Communist aggression. Communism would need to be confronted before it reached the South Pacific, and recognition of the largest and most dangerous Asian Communist state would not fit into this assessment of New Zealand security requirements.³⁸

As mentioned above, concern for the American attitude was one argument used as a qualifying factor in the recommendation for early recognition by the Government's advisers, believing there was a need for the British Commonwealth to remain in step with the US. In fact it was described as "the

³⁶ Extract (JIC), 12 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2.

³⁷ R.H. (Hunter) Wade, 1916-, Assistant-Secretary, NZHCAus, 1947-49; Head Eastern Section, Asia Division, DEA, Wellington, 1950-51; First Secretary, NZEmWash, 1951-56; Director, Colombo Plan Bureau, Colombo, 1957-59; Head, External Aid Division, DEA, Wellington, 1959-62; NZ Commissioner, Singapore, 1962-63; NZHC, Kuala Lumpur, 1963-67.

³⁸ Pacific Pact Part 2: Analysis of New Zealand's Basic Interests in the Pacific in Relation to the Proposed Pacific Pact, 8 August 1949, NA: PM 111/3/3 Part 1.

limiting factor”³⁹ in the JIC’s recommendation for early recognition. It was felt that the desire for full cooperation between the Commonwealth and the US on Far Eastern matters was of “paramount importance”⁴⁰, and, it was described as the one factor “which overrides all other considerations”.⁴¹ This was the situation in December 1949 and it would continue to be the case. There was a perception that movement toward recognition could irritate the Americans.⁴² However, this qualification would have had greater influence on External Affairs’ recommendations to the Government if the US had “offered to undertake our security.. But this is not so”.⁴³

The historiography surrounding the establishment of New Zealand’s non-recognition approach tends to stress the importance and influence of the American attitude on New Zealand’s policy formation. Essentially, the argument has been made that the negative American attitude was the most influential factor in the development of New Zealand’s attitude to the question of recognition during 1949.⁴⁴ While contact with Washington was limited the New Zealand Government knew enough⁴⁵ of the American attitude to know that recognition was likely to antagonise that Government at a time when US favour was believed to be vital to New Zealand’s security, not only in the continuing quest for a Pacific security guarantee, but also in regard to negotiations for the Japanese Peace Treaty. However, concern for the US

³⁹ Extract (JIC), 12 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² JIC Extracts and DEA File Notes *op. cit.*

⁴³ File Note, 6 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2. This quote comes from a handwritten note on the document itself from J.V. Wilson who was one of two Assistant Secretaries of External Affairs at this time, ranking behind only McIntosh and Shanahan in the DEA.

⁴⁴ McCraw, pp. 1-48; Shuker, pp. 24-54.

⁴⁵ McCraw, p. 47 suggests that the US Government did not discuss its attitude on recognition with its counterpart in Wellington. However, there was some degree of discussion between the countries on China policy issues, see Memorandum: DS to Prime Minister’s Department, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1.

perspective, while a contributory factor in the establishment of the non-recognition approach, was not the only reason and it can actually be ranked behind the personal view and favoured approach of Peter Fraser as a China policy determinant in 1949.

FRASER'S VIEW ESTABLISHES THE NON-RECOGNITION POSITION

Peter Fraser was a 'hands on' Minister of External Affairs he was a not a passenger in the formulation of policy and he did not blindly accept the recommendations of his advisers. The fact that he was also Prime Minister meant that he had a great capacity to influence decision-making on foreign policy issues. Fraser's attitude to China policy issues, like his general attitude to foreign policy, was a mixture of moral and practical concerns. A favourable attitude on the question of diplomatic recognition of the Chinese Communists was seen as appeasement to Communist aggression and morally wrong. However, it was also bad policy because too much would be ceded to the Communist side.

The nature of Fraser's own thinking is less accessible than the thinking of his advisers. He did give some indication of this in May when speaking of the dangers of huge Chinese manpower resources being harnessed by the international Communist movement.⁴⁶ By June McIntosh was describing the moral aspect of Fraser's views on the recognition question to New Zealand's Ambassador in Washington, by commenting that the Prime Minister had major reservations about recognising a regime which was seemingly coming "to power by violence".⁴⁷ Later in the year he commented on the potential for international disturbance created by the new regime in China.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Evening Post*, 24 May 1949.

⁴⁷ SecEA to NZAmWash, 14 June 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1.

⁴⁸ *Southern Cross*, 1 October 1949.

However, the arguments put forward by McIntosh at the Canberra meeting between 10 and 11 November appear to encapsulate his Minister's views. Indeed, McIntosh was at pains to emphasise that he was expressing those views.⁴⁹ The Secretary of External Affairs explained that while he was expressing the personal views of Fraser and Nash, these should be seen as the official attitude of the New Zealand Government. An underlying assumption informed McIntosh's comments at Canberra: "in some undefinable way, we shall hurt the Chinese Communists by withholding recognition".⁵⁰

The New Zealand argument at Canberra was a mix of moral and practical considerations. Morally speaking, Fraser's views from earlier in the year⁵¹ had, by November, developed to a point where the recognition question now provided a platform for the espousal of his anti-Communist and anti-appeasement ideals. Thus it was felt that recognition would be the ultimate ingratitude to the Nationalists, a wartime partner and would involve "unnecessarily and ungratefully"⁵² passing over a former ally. He also felt recognition could be seen as a sign of Western weakness, and this fact could encourage Communism elsewhere. To the Prime Minister, the best method of dealing with Chinese Communist aggressors was to be firm. This approach could then reap dividends in the delicate power balance within the United Nations, and could also place New Zealand policy on a high moral ground, as New Zealand and the West would not be seen to be condoning a regime which had ascended through violent means.

It was felt that despite their record of inefficiency and corruption the Nationalists did not deserve to be the victims of external ideological aggression. This was despite the legal basis of the Communist claim to

⁴⁹ Notes for Discussions with Dening and Australian Authorities in Canberra, 11 November 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14/ Part 1.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ see footnotes, 46, 47, and 48 for the Prime Minister's views earlier in the year.

⁵² Far East Talks in Canberra, 10 November 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1.

recognition.⁵³ The Nationalists still had a reasonably large area of control on the Chinese mainland in South-Western China and could possibly hold this territory indefinitely. A further argument on the side of Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists was that they were well established on Formosa, with much of their military strength and administration situated there by November 1949.⁵⁴

Recognition would also be construed as a mark of weakness by the peoples of other South East Asian states. A positive movement on early recognition could give encouragement to local Communist movement in a situation where many of these nations were already considered to be politically, socially, and economically unstable and therefore open to Communist-inspired insurrection. A Communist China could in turn lead to a Communist Asia and with it the liquidation of Western interests and influence in the region, leaving Australia and New Zealand precariously isolated in the South Pacific. With this in mind the point was made that opposition to Communism should be encouraged to linger for as long as possible, particularly in South East Asia.⁵⁵

Besides the moral arguments, the Prime Minister was also concerned that early recognition could have a number of dire practical implications and McIntosh highlighted these at Canberra also. The first of these was the

⁵³ The British felt that it was a "legally objectionable" position to withhold recognition to a regime which had effective central authority over the majority of Chinese mainland territory and the acquiescing Chinese population, CRO to Cecil Day, 22 August 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1a; File Note, 23 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2. [Sir] Cecil Day was a British National who had been Official Secretary to the Governor-General in NZ in the 1930s, he was later appointed NZ External Affairs Liaison Officer in London c. 1940s at a time when there were no career diplomats at the NZHCLon. Although attached to the NZHCLon he was located in the British Cabinet Office where he was given extensive access to Foreign Office telegrams and other printed material. He remained there until he retired and was replaced by Frank Corner at the NZHCLon in 1952.

⁵⁴ Notes for discussion with Dening and Australian Authorities in Canberra, File Note, 11 November 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1. However, included in this same document was the conclusion reached at talks between Acheson and Bevin, earlier in November, that Formosa was likely to fall to the Communists within 12 months.

⁵⁵ Far East Talks in Canberra, 10 November 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1a; Notes for Discussion with Dening and Australia Authorities in Canberra, File Note, 11 November 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1.

suggestion that the situation in China was still too fluid, even in late 1949, for any nation to commit itself to a diplomatic relationship with China's new Communist leaders. It was claimed that the Chinese Civil War had not ended and that recognition could affect the outcome of that conflict.⁵⁶

The Prime Minister was also mindful of the American attitude, and the desire to keep in line with US thought influenced his thinking.⁵⁷ A desire not to "antagonise" the Americans underpinned McIntosh's statements at Canberra.⁵⁸ A significant degree of emphasis was placed on the perceived link between New Zealand's search for security guarantees in the post-War world and US policy on Japan, which was still strongly perceived as a threat to New Zealand during this time.⁵⁹ It was felt that the situation in China could lead the US to build up Japan's military strength once again as a buffer to the perceived threat of Chinese expansion.⁶⁰ If New Zealand participated in a general Commonwealth recognition of China, its influence in Washington could be reduced significantly.

It was also believed that a possible advantage lay in withholding Western recognition so the Communists would see that they needed it, thereby forcing them into a positive request, and placing the West in a stronger bargaining position.⁶¹ It was argued that the West could negotiate certain concessions and obligations from the Communists over prior treaty and trade arrangements. New Zealand cited the position of Hong Kong as an example.

⁵⁶ Notes for discussion with Dening and Australian Authorities, 11 November 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1.

⁵⁷ Memorandum: DS to Prime Minister's Department, 10 May 1949 NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1; *Department of State Bulletin*, 29 August 1949, 21:530, pp. 318-319.

⁵⁸ Far East Talks..., NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1a.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ This statement was very reminiscent of stated American China policy, see for example, Memorandum: DS to Prime Minister's Department, 10 May 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1.

Fraser felt that there was also doubt that recognition would help British Commonwealth interests then or in the future, and the idea that China could be 'Tito-ist', rather than Communist, was a delusion of those who didn't wish to see the real facts of the situation.

He [Fraser] felt people were deluding themselves in thinking that China could be Titoist rather than Communist and at best any such prospect was a wild gamble on which it would be folly to take a plunge.⁶²

The Chinese position in the United Nations, and more particularly the Chinese role as one of the Big Five in the Security Council, was a further practical consideration emphasised at Canberra. Another veto power on the Soviet-Communist side would further undermine the work of the Council, tilting the balance of power toward the Soviet camp. Similarly, New Zealand argued that a Communist Chinese delegation would work "in the interests of Russian policy" in the General Assembly and other United Nations agencies.⁶³ The question of how the Communist Chinese could take the Chinese seat(s) on the various United Nations bodies against the veto of the existing Chinese delegation could lead to a re-examination of the United Nations Charter and further disrupt the already precarious sense of unity in the organisation.⁶⁴

Finally, the fact that general elections were imminent in both New Zealand and Australia dictated that consideration of the question of recognition should be deferred until after these had been held.⁶⁵

⁶² Notes for Discussion with Denning and Australian Authorities in Canberra, 11 November 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ SecEA to NZPDUN, 7 November 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1; File Note: Recognition of Communist China - Commonwealth Statements on the Recognition question, 16 November 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 1a.

CONCLUSIONS

1949 was a crucial year in the development of New Zealand China policy. It was the year when the negative approach towards the question of recognition was established, this would last until 1972. Initially the question of whether or not to recognise the Chinese Communist regime was dismissed as premature until such an entity was in existence. Fraser then decided that he would wait for the nature of the new regime in Peking to reveal itself, and for more definite American and Australian China policies to emerge. It has been argued elsewhere that the inclination of the Labour Government, if re-elected, was to recognise the new Communist leadership in China.⁶⁶ However, the evidence presented here suggests that this was not the case. Throughout 1949 the government's position has been portrayed as hardening against a move to recognition, despite the advice of some officials and knowledge of Britain's views, both of which were favourable toward granting early recognition. The presentation of New Zealand's position at Canberra later in the year served as a reinforcement of this negative non-recognition approach.

As Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs, Fraser determined the approach New Zealand took as he had the power; the officials could only advise. The Fraser line had arguments to deploy against those supporting early recognition. For instance the positive argument claimed the Communists were in effective control of the mainland and had the popular support of the Chinese masses. However, Fraser asserted that the Chinese Civil War was ongoing and the situation was thus too fluid to make such a judgement. The proponents of early recognition believed that the Communists would respond positively to a conciliatory approach. Fraser felt this under-estimated the role of the USSR in the Communist camp in the Civil War. The Prime Minister believed that you did not reward aggression through appeasement feeling it would encourage further aggression. To Fraser it was bad policy and morally wrong to yield to aggression, particularly as a wartime ally would be

⁶⁶ Albinski, p. 33; Burton, p. 90; Reese, p. 152; Shuker, pp. 39-42.

abandoned as a result. While Britain's position in China was acknowledged, New Zealand's position vis-a-vis China was different and it was felt there were no vital interests to protect with early recognition. It was also no excuse to say that recognition did not imply approval of a regime, that it was an expedient measure designed for political convenience. It was felt that this was a distinction those more directly threatened by Communism would not appreciate, and there was a need for the West to provide some leadership to the nations of South East Asia in precarious security positions in relation to Communist China. The importance of the American perspective in the formation of New Zealand's negative attitude to the recognition question has been emphasised in the historiography.⁶⁷ This study, while giving due consideration to the US factor, feels that the personality of Fraser was a more vital aspect. Fraser's anti-Communism and anti-appeasement beliefs, which were manifested in a mixture of moral and practical concerns at Canberra, was the decisive establishing feature. Fraser's ability and capacity to incorporate his own views into China policy enabled him to go against his advisers' recommendations, and to depart from Britain's leadership in a foreign policy matter.

⁶⁷ See the Introduction to this thesis for a review of the historiography surrounding the recognition issue, pp. 1-6.

Chapter Three

1949-1951

The Maintenance of Non-recognition under National

This chapter demonstrates how a negative attitude towards the recognition of Communist China, first established under Labour during 1949, was maintained in the first term of the National Government. In doing this the chapter discusses, briefly, the establishment of the new government in December 1949, it then goes on to survey various public and private decisions and statements of this new government; showing how the non-recognition (and non-admission) policy was reiterated throughout the period between 1949 and 1951. Following this is a brief section discussing attempts to incorporate flexibility into New Zealand's approach to China policy questions, in essence this shows that while official attitudes were dominated by certain factors dictating the maintenance of a negative position, there were other appreciations. After this introductory section the chapter then turns to the central issue of why New Zealand China policy did not change during this period, under the new National Government. It examines this issue by addressing a number of factors which are identified as reasons for the maintenance of a negative official attitude.

THE MAINTENANCE OF THE NON-RECOGNITION APPROACH BETWEEN 1949 AND 1951

Following the establishment of a Communist-directed regime in China in October 1949, New Zealand China policy was principally concerned with the question of whether or not to recognise that regime. Under the direction of Fraser, New Zealand's position was unequivocal; it had no intention to recognise Peking in 1949, a stand made clear to other Commonwealth members at Canberra. This position was maintained despite External Affairs' recommendations that suggested that early recognition of the Chinese

Communist Government was the best course, and that Britain was increasingly disposed to recognise.

However, Fraser's Government was defeated by the National Party in a general election held 30 November. Ten days later Chifley's Australian Labor Government was defeated by the Liberal/Country Party Coalition, led by Robert Menzies. Prior to the election, National had not taken a position on recognition of the Chinese Communists, but it soon became clear that its approach would be very similar to that of Labour. In an early foreign policy statement on 8 December Holland stressed continuity with existing policy.¹

New Zealand's position did not change significantly during this period, even after Britain's move to recognise early in 1950. Britain informed the new government² in Wellington on 16 December of its decision to accord *de jure* recognition to the Communist Chinese Government and sought New Zealand's support for early recognition on the grounds that it was in the best interests of Britain and the Commonwealth.³ Attlee informed Holland on 18 December that the date for recognition would be 2 January 1950, but this was changed later to 6 January.⁴ Other Commonwealth nations followed Britain's lead, with India and Burma actually proposing to act in advance of the UK. Britain felt it could not afford to wait for formal Commonwealth consultation at the Foreign Ministers Conference scheduled for Colombo in January 1950, even though New Zealand believed this to be the agreement.⁵

Colombo contributed nothing new on the recognition question. Most nations had determined their positions prior to the conference. New Zealand's

¹ *Otago Daily Times*, 8 December 1949.

² National took office on 13 December 1949.

³ File Note, 15 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2.

⁴ UK Prime Minister(Attlee) to NZ Prime Minister(Holland), 18 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2.

⁵ NZDel to Commonwealth Conference, Colombo to MinEA, Minutes of Third Meeting, 10 January 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 3.

attitude was that the conference was presented “with a *fait accompli*”⁶ as Britain had recognised the Central People’s Government days before the conference convened believing that deferral of the question until Colombo was inadvisable, given the distinct and, apparently intractable, positions formulated prior to the meeting. Therefore, each nation should be left to pursue its own interests.⁷

In February 1950 the US, through its Ambassador Robert Scotten, had enquired as to New Zealand’s position on the China question in the UN. The situation was vital at that point in terms of Chinese representation in the Far Eastern Commission. A decision to admit Peking to that body would have been internationally and domestically embarrassing for the US Administration, as the FEC was situated in Washington. The US sought an indication from New Zealand if it would follow Britain’s lead and recognise early. Scotten was told that while recognition of Peking was inevitable, there was no hurry on New Zealand’s part.⁸

New Zealand’s position on recognition and to Communist China in general was illustrated repeatedly by the negative attitude to the question of Peking’s membership in the UN whenever the issue arose. This was seen most vividly in September 1950 when Wellington instructed the UN delegation to support a report from the UN Credentials Committee⁹ which favoured the credentials of the representatives of the Nationalist Chinese. The opposition to Chinese Communist inclusion was justified by two arguments. The first was that such a question could not be considered while aggression was being openly encouraged by Communist authorities; and that the Nationalists were still regarded as the lawful Government of China in Wellington.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Shanahan File Note, 13 February 1950, AusMinEA to MinEA, 9 March 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 3.

Wider strategic and security interests dominated China policy during the latter part of 1950 and into 1951, this was of course when the Korean War began. During this period the negative attitude toward China hardened. The Government endorsed the UN Resolution 498(v) of 1 February 1951 which condemned Communist China as an aggressor.¹⁰ Upon this development New Zealand, as a believer and supporter of the UN system and its principles, found itself obliged to maintain a negative position to questions of Communist China's admission to the UN and to recognition in general. This position was only enhanced by Chinese actions in Korea and the belief that these posed a threat to New Zealand's physical security.

FLEXIBILITY IN CHINA POLICY.

China policy during this period was somewhat flexible. New Zealand did not really question the legal and factual claims of the Communists to recognition, or to UN membership. There was a feeling that the Communists' claims had a solid base and they had fulfilled the standard international convention for recognition in exercising effective central authority over the mainland with the acquiescence of the majority of the population. There was also the realisation that from October 1949 Peking had been responsible for Chinese foreign policy and had been recognised by a number of nations. There was also some feeling that the continued absence of the PRC from the UN was an impediment to the effectiveness of that body as an instrument of international peace and security.¹¹

Berendsen expressed this flexibility at a meeting of Commonwealth UN delegations in New York in September 1950. He emphasised that New Zealand opposed Communist China's admission into the UN because it believed this would encourage further Communist aggression in the "state of

⁹ NZDel Brief, 5 September 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 5.

¹⁰ SecEA to Comptroller of Customs, 10 March 1953, NA: PM 40/11/1 Part 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

crisis”¹² in which the world found itself “at this time”.¹³ Thus Wellington believed a more realistic line would be not to make a movement which could encourage the perceived inherent aggressive and expansionist tendencies of international Communism.¹⁴

Speech notes prepared for Holland to use at the Commonwealth Prime Minister’s meeting early in January 1951 are another example of the desire to express arguments on both sides of the recognition debate. These suggested that tensions in the Far East could have been diminished had the PRC been generally recognised and admitted to the UN at an earlier time. While there was concern for the plight of Chiang Kai-shek “realities”¹⁵ would have to be faced sooner or later. The notes also asked why Communist China should have to feel accountable to an organisation which denied it entry.¹⁶ Yet the notes also suggest that it would not be right “or even expedient to make concessions to the aggressors in the full flush of their aggression”,¹⁷ and it was difficult to see how recognition could have resulted at that time “especially in view of the truculent and uncompromising attitude that the Communists have already taken towards attempts at a peaceful settlement in the Far East”.¹⁸

THE REASONS FOR CONTINUING WITH NON-RECOGNITION.

Various factors contributed to the continued New Zealand opposition to recognition, including the dominant political background of the new

¹² Memorandum and Record of Meeting of Heads of Commonwealth Delegations held at the UK Delegation Offices, 22 September 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 6.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid; First Secretary, NZDelUN to SecEA, 22 September 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 6.

¹⁵ Speech notes prepared for the NZ Prime Minister, 19 December 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 6.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

government, the continued influence of Peter Fraser, the desire to coordinate policy with the new Australian Government, concern for the Nationalist Chinese regime on Formosa, the increasing influence of the negative American position on recognition, concern over the correct functioning of the UN, the exigencies of the international relations environment of this period. Another factor was the anti-appeasement belief that recognition might encourage Chinese aggression and subversion, while weakening the standing of the West in the eyes of other Asian peoples, and undermining the latter's determination to resist Communism. From the middle of 1950, the conflict in Korea can also be seen as a discouragement to recognition, once it was under way, particularly when American, New Zealand and other Commonwealth forces were involved. Thus a move to recognise a nearby Communist power that might well be behind North Korean aggression was highly unlikely. Subsequent Chinese intervention in Korea took recognition further off the agenda.

Departmental assessments in early December covered many of the points which would come to form the main justifications for the new government's maintenance of the non-recognition approach. One such report was written by R.H. Wade, Head of the Eastern Section of the Asia Division in the DEA. He believed that the advent of the new government made a recommendation for early recognition more objectionable. National's promotion of an anti-Communist line in its election campaign was identified as one difficulty. Similarly, recognition would run contrary to the political base and thought of the National Party. Related to this view was the argument that Australia would come to play an increasingly influential role in New Zealand China policy formation, and it was felt that no action should be taken without prior consultation with the new Australian Government, which had expressed similar sentiments on Communism as the National Party.¹⁹

¹⁹ Wade File Note, 12 December 1949, NA: P 264/3/14 Part 2.

When Britain called for New Zealand backing for its decision to accord recognition it came at a difficult time for the new government. Having been in power for only a short time, it was unprepared to make such a decision, and it is not surprising that National followed a similar path to the previous Labour Government initially. The question was raised while Doidge²⁰ was still preparing a series of recommendations to Cabinet, including one on recognition of the Chinese Communist regime.

There was consensus among National and Labour leaders that Britain's decision to recognise was overly precipitate.²¹ National took office on 13 December, and the following day Sidney Holland invited Peter Fraser to accompany Doidge to the Colombo Conference.²² Although Fraser declined the invitation, saying that Labour Party policy on questions concerning South East Asia was well known, the offer demonstrated a concern for bipartisan approach and the respect the National leadership had for the Labour leader in foreign policy.²³ Fraser was also asked to consult with Doidge on China policy questions at this time and the level of political consensus on China policy can be seen in the former and current External Affairs Ministers' agreeing a communication should be sent to London expressing concern at the timing of Britain's decision and reiterating the desire for consultation at Colombo.²⁴

The Department of External Affairs was also mindful of the domestic political element contained within the recognition question, and this was relayed to the

²⁰ Doidge, Hon. [Sir] Frederick Widdowson, 1884-1954; NZ MP, 1938-51; MinEA 1949-51; NZHCLon, 1951-54.

²¹ File Note, 20 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2.

²² James Thorn, *Peter Fraser, New Zealand's Wartime Prime Minister*, London: Odhams Press, 1952, p. 271.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ NZ Prime Minister to UKHCWell, 21 December 1949, MinEA to NZHCCan, 22 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2.

new government.²⁵ The Department was aware of the eminent position Fraser still held in foreign policy deliberations at the political level and noted the possibility of Fraser's implacable opposition to early recognition as another point against recommending it in December.²⁶ This factor may illuminate the reasoning behind the approach to Fraser when considering the reply to initial British calls for support for early recognition, and it would appear that departmental influence was significant in the urging of consultation with Fraser.²⁷ However, motivation for the overtures toward Fraser also came from the politicians themselves as was seen in Holland's invitation for Fraser to attend the Colombo Conference. Thus Fraser's continued role in the maintenance of a negative attitude toward Communist China should not be understated, as his advice was considered important enough for both the new government, and its advisers, to incorporate into the policy formation process.

It would appear on the balance of the evidence that Labour would have pursued a similar line of argument to National in dealing with Britain's request and with the recognition question, had it won the 1949 election.²⁸ One of the National Government's main arguments against early recognition at this point was that the timing was premature. That Labour also believed this can be seen in McIntosh's statements at Canberra in November 1949, and Fraser's consultations with Doidge in December.

New Zealand received support from Australia in its reaction to Britain's call for early recognition when Menzies telephoned to say that, having just fought

²⁵ Wade File Note, 12 December 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Reese, p. 152, argues "There is no doubt that the Labour governments in Canberra and Wellington" would have recognised if they had been successful in the 1949 elections. Unfortunately he doesn't cite any documentary evidence in support of this assertion. Fraser's strong argument against recognition when Prime Minister, and his support for non-recognition in Opposition, suggests that he would not have hastened to recognise if he had won the election in 1949, see also Chapter Two of this thesis for Fraser's argument against recognition in 1949.

an election on an anti-Communist platform, he could not at that stage recognise a Communist regime.²⁹ Doidge came under increasing Australian influence in this period. An early instance of this occurred when he was in Canberra prior to Christmas 1949. In a telegram to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations on 21 December, he promoted the argument that recognition was unlikely to offer tangible benefits to New Zealand, nor did he see it as a portent of improved Chinese behaviour, or their adherence to international legal conventions. Doidge cited the mistreatment of American consulate officials in Mukden in October 1949 as an example of the Chinese Communists' failing to observe international legal standards.³⁰ He appears to have taken the view that Peking was inherently expansionist. Given that China's South East Asian neighbours were seen as already unstable, Doidge felt that recognition would send the wrong message to the populations of Indo-China and Korea.³¹

Further evidence of the alignment to the Australian attitude came when Doidge and Percy Spender, the Australian Minister of External Affairs, acted in unison on the recognition question at Colombo in early January 1950. The British decision had caused the new governments in New Zealand and Australia a degree of domestic political embarrassment, given the political backgrounds each had brought into office, and this provided further motivation for criticism at Colombo.³² Each Anzac representative spoke of their country's dissatisfaction with the timing of Britain's decision. Spender wondered aloud where the principle of Commonwealth consultation had been prioritised in Britain's decision. Doidge commented that there was an appreciation of the expediencies involved in Britain's decision, but the fact

²⁹ File Note, 15 December 1949, McIntosh File Note, 20 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2.

³⁰ MinEA (in Canberra) to SSCR, 21 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² NZDel Commonwealth Conference, Colombo to MinEA, Minutes of Third Meeting, 10 January 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 3.

that recognition didn't necessarily imply approval of a regime was a distinction that many countries more directly threatened by expansive/aggressive Communism would not accept.³³

Both Doidge and Spender accepted at Colombo that recognition was inevitable, but argued that it should be postponed.³⁴ Essentially, they were dissatisfied with the timing of Britain's move.³⁵ The new government in Wellington, like its predecessor, admitted the question could not be indefinitely postponed, but wanted coordination between the democracies to enhance their influence on China with a more united stand. Deferral and postponement was also the trend of departmental advice, External Affairs had maintained since the Canberra meeting in November 1949 that the question of recognition was really of little practical consideration to New Zealand in terms of the minimal diplomatic, political, and economic contact with China. It was thought deferral of the issue could not hurt New Zealand's interests because these were inconsequential anyway. Deferral would also give the new government time to analyse the developing positions of the US and Australia and adopt a position accordingly.³⁶

Deferral and ultimately a negative approach to the question of recognition would also help to preserve relations with the Chinese Nationalist regime, which was now located on the island of Formosa. Like the US, New Zealand continued to recognise the Chinese Nationalists as the Government of China and it was felt a positive move regarding recognition of Peking would leave the Nationalists on Formosa in an extremely precarious situation. New Zealand's view of the Nationalists plight was that they had been the victims of external ideological aggression and for this reason alone, Wellington could

³³ Ibid; *Evening Post*, 18 January 1950.

³⁴ NZDel Commonwealth Conference, Colombo to MinEA, Minutes of Third Meeting, 10 January 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 3.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Wade File Note, 12 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2.

not turn its back on Chiang's regime. This moral stance was compounded with another- the belief that a wartime ally should not be abandoned.³⁷ There was also a security argument binding officials to the belief that the Nationalists should not be abandoned. In essence this argument asserted that the strategic position of the democracies in the Pacific would be weakened by compromising the status of Formosa with early recognition of the Chinese Communist regime on the mainland.³⁸

In many respects concern over the plight of the Nationalists was a personal issue regarding the position of Nationalist Consul-General Wang Feng. It was felt, within the department in particular, that any deliberation on recognition would have to consider Wang's position and, by association, that of the government he represented. Wang asked McIntosh in December 1949 about New Zealand's position on recognition of the Chinese Communists. McIntosh stated that there was no intention to recognise at that time, but he felt it was only a matter of time before recognition would result and he could give no guarantee New Zealand's position would be the same in the new year. However, an indication of the high personal regard for Wang within the department was illustrated by McIntosh's comments that he would do his utmost to ensure that Wang and his wife received asylum in New Zealand, in the event of recognition, if they so desired.³⁹

Another reason why non-recognition was maintained was the belief that early recognition would be too antagonistic to the Americans and would probably strengthen that nations determination to build a stronger Japan, at the expense of New Zealand's security. Thus it was unlikely Australia and New Zealand would move to the early recognition position while they still coveted a US

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ File Note: Recognition of the Chinese Communist Government, 25 May 1951, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 7.

³⁹ McIntosh File Note, 23 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2.

security guarantee in the Pacific.⁴⁰ Menzies said as much at the Prime Ministers' Meeting in January 1951 when he reiterated the Australian conviction not to depart from the American line. At that meeting Australia's Prime Minister declared that it would be "unfortunate" if the Commonwealth meeting did not take heed of the "policies and intentions" of the US, and that if a larger global conflict arose the Commonwealth would not survive without US protection.⁴¹ Holland backed his Australian counterpart in suggesting that the meeting should attempt to come up with a "positive gesture to the United States" on China policy issues.⁴²

It had been a "grand aim"⁴³ of New Zealand officials since 1945 to secure an American commitment to the security of New Zealand in the Pacific, in fact "in simple terms what we seek above everything else is an American security guarantee".⁴⁴ New Zealand therefore had no desire to irritate the US in an environment which was becoming increasingly propitious for the realisation of New Zealand's aim. The US had been preoccupied with containing Communism in Europe, since 1945, and the Pacific and South East Asia had been after-thoughts. It was New Zealand's view that a Pacific pact was required to better balance the existing NATO Pact, otherwise the West's 'back door' could be left open to the Communists.⁴⁵ However, it was the Korean War, and the demonstration of Chinese Communist power there,

⁴⁰ NZDel Commonwealth Conference, Colombo to MinEA (NZ Prime Minister), 11 January 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 3; Colombo Conference January 1950 - Recognition of the Chinese Communist Government, 5 May 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 4.

⁴¹ PMM, January 1951 (London), Minutes of 2nd Meeting, 4 January 1951, NA: PM 153/31/6 Part 1.

⁴² PMM, January 1951 (London), Minutes of 1st Meeting, 4 January 1951, NA: PM 153/31/6 Part 1.

⁴³ Corner Memorandum, July 1948, in Templeton, (ed.), pp. 121-122.

⁴⁴ File Note: Japanese Treaty and Security Pact, 8 February 1951, NA: PM 153/31/7 Part 1.

⁴⁵ Doidge in *Auckland Star*, 16 September 1950; *New Zealand Herald*, 18 September 1950.

which provided a context for the realisation of New Zealand's security objective.⁴⁶

The need for a Pacific pact became more urgent when it became clear that the US would press on with a 'soft' Japanese peace settlement.⁴⁷ Doidge told Parliament in November 1950 that in discussions with Dulles he had stressed New Zealand's concerns at the risk of resurgent Japanese militarism, and New Zealand's desire for safeguards.⁴⁸ Similar sentiments had been expressed in the Commonwealth forum at Colombo in January 1950.⁴⁹ When Doidge met with Dulles and Spender in Canberra, in February 1951, the connection between concern for renewed Japanese aggression and the related New Zealand concern for its security was acknowledged.⁵⁰ Wellington considered that a Pacific pact would be a corollary for New Zealand support for a soft Japanese Treaty. In giving this support, New Zealand would have to "acquiesce"⁵¹ in the American plan for the Japanese Treaty in the sense there were certain guarantees which were felt as a necessary condition for New Zealand's support:

A Treaty which the Americans are planning for Japan... puts no controls or restrictions upon Japan and also allows her to re-arm... in such a situation we feel we need some

⁴⁶ *New Zealand Listener* (ed.), 28 July 1950; Doidge in *Press*, 9 August 1950; *Otago Daily Times*, 13 January 1951; Munro in *Dominion*, 26 February 1951; *NZPD*, 299 (1953), p. 426, (Rac).

⁴⁷ For an examination of the reasons behind the US desire to strengthen Japan see, Dulles to Acheson, 8 December 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VI, pp. 1359-1360; for an examination of the transformation in US security policy in general see, *FRUS*, 1950, I, pp. 126-492, VI, pp. 250-618.

⁴⁸ *NZPD*, 292 (1950), pp. 2940-3944, (Doidge).

⁴⁹ NZDel Commonwealth Conference, Colombo to MinEA (NZ Prime Minister), 11 January 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 3.

⁵⁰ NZHCAus to MinEA, 18 February 1951, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 6; *DNZER Vol. III*, pp. 614-615.

⁵¹ File Note: Japanese Treaty and Security Pact, 8 February 1951, NA: PM 153/31/7 Part 1.

reassurance and this reassurance could be given to us by some form of American guarantee of our security.⁵²

Thereafter negotiations went ahead on both issues simultaneously and in September 1951, a week before the Japanese Peace Treaty was signed, the ANZUS Treaty was concluded.⁵³ The relationship between ANZUS and China policy was that it was in part intended to provide protection against Asian Communist expansion. It has been suggested that the fear of Communism was as great if not greater than the fear of renewed Japanese aggression.⁵⁴ Accommodating likely American reactions to recognition was a sound reason not to act as it was acknowledged that it would run against US policy “on whom, in the last resort, the security of the Pacific countries largely depends”.⁵⁵

Wellington was also concerned as to what sort of effect recognition of the Chinese Communists could have on the proper functioning of the UN. New Zealand’s stance on China policy issues in the UN during this period was, in practice, negative toward the question of recognition and admission. The position was initially set out in briefs for the Fifth General Assembly Session. These accepted the factual and legal argument that the Communists were the Government of China and that the continued absence of Peking from the UN was affecting that body’s role in maintaining international peace and order. However, these theoretical perspectives were subsumed within the realities of the intensifying Cold War during this period. The admission of Peking to UN bodies was viewed as a potential increase in power for the Communist bloc, with greater voting strength accruing and an additional veto on the Security

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Draft Japanese Peace Treaty, 1 April 1951, Pacific Security Arrangements, 19 April 1951, *EAR*, 1:1, pp. 2-4; *NZPD*, 294 (1951), pp. 318-319, (Doidge); Draft Japanese Peace Treaty, 13 July 1951, *EAR*, 1:5, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁴ McIntyre, *Background to the ANZUS Pact*, p. 346; McLean, p. 79.

⁵⁵ File Note: Recognition of the Chinese Communist Government, 25 May 1951, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 7.

Council. There was also concern over how the Chinese Communists might use their membership as a platform for Communist propaganda.⁵⁶

Essentially New Zealand's attitude toward Chinese representation in the UN rested upon the attitude toward recognition, thus the two central China policy questions were treated *pari passu*. Theoretically abstention appeared less harmful to New Zealand's interests, but such a policy was seen as being inexpedient in the international situation. In addition to strengthening the Communist position in the UN, Communist Chinese representation in the international body would greatly strengthen the Communist position in Asia and correspondingly weaken the West there. However, the dominant factor in the negative UN stance was Peking's action in Korea, which was seen as aggressive. Therefore, it was felt New Zealand policy would be most propitiously framed within those of the Great Powers, if these changed then New Zealand's attitude would need to be reconsidered. Subject to this possibility, New Zealand decided to support the Nationalist delegation in the UN by opposing moves to expel them and to admit the representatives of the Communists.⁵⁷

A discernible trend can be observed within Departmental recommendations on recognition after the November 1949 election. External Affairs' position remained, initially, the same as before: early recognition was still believed to be the best course in theory.⁵⁸ However, through the remainder of 1949 and into 1950, this position did alter. McIntosh commented in December, before National took office, that the new Government would need time to adopt a policy position and he was unclear if New Zealand's recognition policy would change.⁵⁹ The Departmental shift in emphasis away from early recognition

⁵⁶ NZDel Brief, 5 September 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 5; Wade File Note, 12 December 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 6.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Wade File Note, 12 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2.

⁵⁹ SecEA to Cecil Day, 7 December 1949, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 2.

cannot be seen simply as a response to the change of government, because National continued with the same policy as Labour. The same factors that were influencing China policy in the UN were also acting on the Department's attitude. An amalgam of internal factors and international developments made the recommendation for early recognition less attractive. Military assessments also qualified support for the initial departmental recommendation for early recognition during 1949, through being very mindful of the negative US attitude on recognition of the Chinese Communists. This caveat began to assume greater importance as it was perceived that the forces of Communism were strongly demonstrating their inherent aggressive/expansive tendencies in South East Asia.

The Department realised the question of recognition had importance beyond the actual decision. This line was espoused, for example, in an assessment on recognition in December 1950. This believed that differences on recognition had divided the Commonwealth and the free world at a time when unity of purpose was required if the democracies were to survive the challenges then presented. Like earlier evaluations, it drew together all of the political, factual, and legal arguments on both sides. While the arguments in favour of early recognition still outnumbered those against, the conclusion reached was that action should be delayed to avoid appearing to reward aggressors in the full extent of their aggression.⁶⁰ It was also argued, later, that it would be illogical to pursue two diametrically opposed China policies - ie, extending recognition while at the same time New Zealand troops were resisting Chinese military aggression in Korea. The affect recognition could have on the morale of New Zealand's forces in Korea was thus a further consideration in the maintenance of non-recognition.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Wade File Note, 12 December 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 6.

⁶¹ File Note: Recognition of the Chinese Communist Government, 25 May 1951, NA: PM 264/1/4 Part 7.

Communist China's apparent defiance of UN authority in Korea impacted upon New Zealand's attitude to the Korean hostilities and on the maintenance of a negative attitude toward China in Wellington. Successful Communist aggression in Korea could, it was felt, undermine the confidence of non-Communist countries in Asia, and to some extent have a similar effect in Europe. It was felt that if the West did not make a united stand on Korea many Asian states facing a more direct Communist threat would be less likely to believe Western statements on the containment of Communism. New Zealand believed that just as the success of the Chinese Communists had encouraged further Communist activity throughout South East Asia, and as Britain's recognition of Peking had put fresh heart into the activities of terrorists in Malaya, so yet another victory for Communism in Korea could well lead to a conclusion that the perceived aim of world domination was attainable.⁶² Thus there was a conviction within officialdom in Wellington that successful Chinese Communist aggression in Korea, and Tibet, could not be appeased and rewarded with recognition, as this would be "interpreted" as a sign of "weakness".⁶³

Korea marked the high point of the post-war threat perception of China. During this period perceptions of the PRC as an international aggressor constituting a threat to all South East Asian nations were firmly established and New Zealand was close enough to this region for her national interests to feel threatened.⁶⁴ Thus stopping the advance of international Communism became linked to national security imperatives. This was despite Korea not,

⁶² Wade File Note, 12 December 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 6.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *NZPD*, 291 (1950), pp. 2138-2139, (Doidge).

initially, being seen as “greatly important”⁶⁵ within evaluations of Western strategy prior to the outbreak of hostilities in June 1950.⁶⁶

The Korean situation was seen as having direct implications for Peking’s foreign policy. Ineffective action in Korea could conceivably encourage Communist China to become more actively interventionist in South East Asia and even to undertake attacks on Tibet and Formosa earlier than anticipated. There was concern that South Korea was the last bastion of democracy north of Indo-China in the continental Far East. The fall of Korea could eventually lead to the exclusion of the West from the Far East, leaving New Zealand and Australia in a similar predicament to that faced in 1941-42.⁶⁷ It was believed that Communist propaganda would undoubtedly take the opportunity of impressing upon the nations of South East Asia the lesson of Korea.⁶⁸

Chinese intervention in Korea brought a new level of intensity and significance to the war. To a degree, it had been anticipated that Chinese Communist forces *could* enter the conflict at some point.⁶⁹ It was thought that Chinese intervention could come either through taking part in the fighting, or by guaranteeing a North Korean political and military line of defence, for example at the 38th parallel. Both methods might be utilised at some point.⁷⁰ R.H. Wade, raised the possibility of the PRC acting in a defensive manner by commenting that Chinese intervention could be designed merely to defend the

⁶⁵ Extract: from *US News and World Report*, SSCR to UKHCWell, 5 May 1950, NA: PM 324/2/3 Part 1.

⁶⁶ McGibbon, *Korean War*, pp. 76-77.

⁶⁷ Wade File Note: Implications of the Korean Conflict for Southeast Asia, 29 June 1950, NA: PM 324/2/3 Part 1; *Evening Post*, 29 June 1950; *NZPD*, 298 (1952), p. 1475.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Wade File Note, 6 September 1950, NA: PM 324/2/3 Part 2.; Cecil Day to SecEA, 26 October 1950, NA: PM 324/4/13 Part 1; McGibbon, *Korean War*, p. 153, says that the imminence of Chinese intervention was “Unbeknown to the New Zealand authorities”. This is not questioned. However, there was some departmental anticipation that the Chinese could conceivably enter the conflict.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Manchurian border.⁷¹ There was also concern that Peking's intervention could instigate a larger military confrontation, even if the USSR was not actively involved. External Affairs believed that Peking was expecting a larger conflict to develop out of Korea and thought this explained PLA troop movements in September and October 1950 into strategic positions along the Manchurian border.⁷²

Initially it was felt that the PRC intervened in Korea as part of a "grand Communist strategy".⁷³ This was Berendsen's view, in accordance with the predominant view in Washington that the PRC were acting as Russian stooges in Korea.⁷⁴ It was also argued that the motivations for Peking's actions in Korea were aggressive in nature and that the offensives in Korea were planned in advance of their execution.⁷⁵ J.V. Wilson, at that time an assistant Secretary of External Affairs, rejected the idea that the PRC was acting in a defensive manner because UN forces had come to close to its borders because,

The scale of the offensive almost certainly indicates that the Chinese are bent on nothing less than the expulsion of United Nations troops from Korea and of course the collapse of the whole United Nations programme for the future of that country.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Wade File Note: Some problems connected with the Korean affair, 6 September 1950, NA: PM 324/2/3 Part 2.

⁷² Ibid; File Note: 'Korea', 20 September 1950, NA: PM 324/2/3 Part 2.

⁷³ McGibbon, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

⁷⁴ CIA Memorandum, 8 November 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, VII, pp. 1101-1106.

⁷⁵ Wilson File Note, 8 December 1950, NA: PM 324/2/3 Part 4.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Coupled with the Chinese declaration of its intent to liberate Indo-China, the Korean intervention showed that “China has started on a career of large-scale aggression”, and it was “overt and direct”.⁷⁷

CONCLUSIONS

The new National Government maintained the existing negative attitude to the resolution of the central China policy questions: diplomatic recognition and UN representation. There was little movement in this position throughout this period, if anything New Zealand’s negative attitude hardened as the events of the period unfolded. Within this stance was an explicit rejection of stated British policy which favoured early recognition. In fact New Zealand and Australia were openly critical of Britain’s decision to proceed with recognition, believing that the timing was premature and that there had been a lack of consultation within the Commonwealth on the issue. New Zealand’s position was repeatedly demonstrated in its attitude toward the question of Chinese representation in the UN. While it was acknowledged in this forum that recognition and UN admission was inevitable, it was felt there was no need for haste on either issue. Therefore, New Zealand supported the credentials of the Nationalists and maintained a negative stance when the question of Peking’s admission to the international body was raised. In the later part of this period, as events in Korea unfolded, China policy became dominated by wider strategic and security interests. This saw policy framed within an expedient understanding of the realities of international politics. The maintenance of non-recognition was enhanced by the perception of Peking’s apparent defiance of the UN in Korea. New Zealand’s support for UN authority, and belief in its principles, clearly focussed the negative approach to the recognition question in the light of Chinese aggression in Korea.

The lack of movement in policy during this era meant the important discussion of the chapter was to examine reasons why the non-recognition approach was

⁷⁷ Ibid.

maintained. A number of reasons were identified as factors militating against recognition, including the newness of the National Administration and its anti-Communist orientation which meant it was unlikely to depart from the policy established under Labour. Domestic political consensus on China policy issues, a factor which explained the continued influence of Peter Fraser on policy while in Opposition was also a maintaining factor. This consensus was also extended to Australia as that nation's views were incorporated into New Zealand's approach. Another reason was concern for the relationship with the Chinese Nationalists. Morally speaking it was felt that the Nationalists should not be abandoned because they were victims of external Communist aggression. Security and strategic concerns were a practical argument for maintaining the link with the Nationalists as it was suggested that recognition of Peking could vitally affect New Zealand's security position, not only in the Asia/Pacific region, but also in the correct functioning of the UN. The American perspective was an important, but not overriding, consideration. Other reasons loomed as large. From the evidence presented it could be argued that even without the American alliance factor in the background, New Zealand might well have followed a similar policy anyway. For example, perceptions of Communist Chinese actions and behaviour were also influential and there was a belief that recognition wouldn't alter Peking's foreign policy, in fact it was felt that it could actually encourage further aggression. This deeply entrenched anti-appeasement argument, first utilised in China policy by Fraser, believed it was bad policy to reward aggression with a favourable attitude on recognition. This fear was seemingly realised in Chinese actions in Korea. The Korean War's influence on China policy was perhaps the most significant maintaining agent in this period. Once that conflict was under way, more particularly when US, New Zealand and other Commonwealth forces were involved, a move to recognise a nearby Communist power, which was helping, and perceived as behind, North Korean bellicosity, was very unlikely. The subsequent Chinese intervention in Korea further reinforced the existing desire to maintain the non-recognition approach.

Chapter Four

1951-1954

Reconsidering Recognition?

China policy between 1951 and 1954 was characterised by a significant softening in official attitudes toward the Chinese Communist regime in Peking, although New Zealand continued with the existing negative approach to diplomatic recognition and United Nations membership. This Chapter examines both why the softening took place and why the negative approach to China policy questions was maintained. The Chapter is presented in three sections. The first describes New Zealand China policy throughout the period by examining public and private statements on both sides of the recognition argument. The second section explores the reasons for the softening, and the third looks at reasons why the existing policy approach was maintained.

CHINA POLICY BETWEEN 1951 AND 1954

Although the non-recognition approach was maintained by the Government throughout this period, there was considerable discussion about reconsidering this approach. An early example of this was the statement by the acting Minister of External Affairs, Clifton Webb, in February 1951.¹ He said New Zealand should long ago have recognised Communist China and supported her admission to the UN, claiming that it was unrealistic to regard Chiang Kai-shek as a spokesman for all Chinese. Webb did say that Chinese actions in Korea had hurt their claims for recognition and UN admission. However, it was widely believed that he had called for immediate PRC admission to the UN.²

¹ *Otago Daily Times*, 16 February 1951; MinEA to NZHCAus, NZHCAus to MinEA, 16 February 1951, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 6.

² *Ibid.*

Webb's remarks did cause a degree of embarrassment for Doidge who was in Australia for talks with his Australian and American counterparts on a Pacific Pact. In his explanation to Doidge, Webb said he was expressing a personal view and not that of the Government.³ In March Doidge clarified the New Zealand Government's position to Spender in commenting that he felt it was "essential" to do nothing which might have an adverse affect on public opinion in the US, and on relations between the Anzac's and the US.⁴ That this was becoming a crucial aspect in China policy can be seen in the voting advice for the Sixth UN General Assembly which said that the Chinese Communists "had put themselves out of court"⁵ regarding the UN, and that "New Zealand...continues to support the Nationalist Government"⁶. It was also seen in the ANZUS Council meeting in August 1952⁷, and also in a departmental information paper in July of that year.⁸ Similarly briefs for a delegation to Korea in November 1952 and for the Prime Minister's Meeting in June 1953 also rejected a move toward recognising Peking at that time.⁹

Wellington emphasised that the American line was being followed in more direct dealings with the US Administration, also in June 1953. When told that the US would not regard the conclusion of an armistice in Korea as sufficient justification for a policy change¹⁰, New Zealand said it would not raise the question of Chinese representation in the UN.¹¹ Later in the year at the

³ Ibid.

⁴ File Note: Aus-NZ Consultations, Sydney, 14 March 1951, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 6.

⁵ Extract: Agenda for Sixth Session UNGA, 23 October 1951, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

⁶ Extract: Agenda for Sixth Session UNGA, 16 October 1951, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

⁷ Aus, NZ, US, Pacific Security Council, First Meeting, Honolulu, NA: PM 111/3/3/10 Part 1.

⁸ DEA Information Paper, 29 July 1952, NA: PM 264/4/8 Part 1.

⁹ File Note: NZDel to Korea - China, 1 November 1952, PMM, London, June 1953, Arguments for and against Recognition, 1 May 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

¹⁰ File Note, Untitled Memorandum, 15 June 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

¹¹ Ibid, File Note, 19 June 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

ANZUS Council meeting in Washington a communique was issued in which the three governments declared that there was no question of entertaining Communist China's admission to the UN or to extending recognition.¹² This was seen as a hardening of New Zealand's position and it appeared as if Webb's reconsideration argument was being placed into the background at that time. It would appear that at this time the Prime Minister moved to assert his authority over his sometimes wayward Minister of External Affairs, instructing Webb to avoid making further statements which could confuse the US as to New Zealand's favoured approach on China policy questions.¹³

However, after returning from the Geneva Conference in 1954, where he had been impressed with Chou En-lai,¹⁴ Webb again urged a reconsideration of China policy in Parliament.¹⁵ His comments aroused a great deal of interest in New Zealand¹⁶ and overseas. The US and Australia were in the main unimpressed and officials, including McIntosh and Webb had to qualify the comments, saying it was an airing of an alternative approach and less of a commitment to action. Voting advice for the Ninth UN General Assembly, which expressed support for continuing with the method of deferring consideration of the question of Chinese representation¹⁷, further indicated that Webb's comments were indeed not a commitment for a change in policy.

¹² *EAR*, 3:9 (1953), p. 26, the Communique was the result of the second ANZUS Council meeting held in Washington in September 1953. Webb was present at the meeting.

¹³ NZ Prime Minister to MinEA, 14 September 1953, McIntosh to Shanahan, 17 September 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 9.

¹⁴ *EAR*, 4:4 (1954), pp. 15-16.

¹⁵ *NZPD*, 303 (1954), p. 212.

¹⁶ *Auckland Star* (Editorial), 7 & 9 July 1954, *New Zealand Herald*, 9 July 1954.

¹⁷ Ninth Regular Session, UN General Assembly, 24 August 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10.

REASONS FOR RECONSIDERING RECOGNITION

Various factors contributed to the softening in attitude. These include the personal opinion of Clifton Webb, Minister of External Affairs during this period, and some sympathy for Britain's approach. Britain felt Peking could be 'detached' from Moscow if a more conciliatory approach was utilised in China policy. Coupled to the Webb and British factors was a degree of domestic support for increased dialogue with Communist China. This was expressed in the form of press comment and by political pressure groups which called for a softer approach toward China. Lending support to the conciliation and negotiation argument was the more favourable perception of Chinese behaviour in international relations, particularly in the view of the conduct of the Chinese delegation to the Geneva Conference in 1954. Related to this factor, for New Zealand, was an increasing dissatisfaction with the American attitude to dealings with the PRC. A significant factor in the minds of some officials was the need to avoid a large-scale US-China confrontation. There was concern in Wellington that the Americans were pushing Peking too hard, for example in the handling of the Offshore Islands dispute and in the recalcitrant attitude of the US delegation at Geneva.

The most visible exponent for a softened official attitude toward China was Clifton Webb.¹⁸ In the foreword to Webb's biography Sir John Marshall described his approach to China policy questions as

before his time in advocating the recognition of Communist China. This did not endear him to the United States. He wanted to take a great leap at a time when short steps, as history has now proved, were the only way.¹⁹

¹⁸ Webb, [Sir] Thomas Clifton, 1889-1962, NZ MP, 1943-54; Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, 1949-54, of External Affairs and Island Territories, 1951-54; NZHCLon, 1954-58. Webb replaced Doidge as MinEA after the 1951 general election, which was held in September of that year. X

¹⁹ S.M. Belshaw, *Man of Integrity: A Biography of Sir Clifton Webb*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1979, p. 13. X

As one historian has commented, Webb “as a lawyer” was “conciliatory by disposition, and conscious of the traditional legal criteria for recognition of states”.²⁰ Indeed Webb’s approach to foreign policy questions was underpinned by his background in the legal profession as a Queen’s Counsel, and as Attorney-General between 1949 and 1954. He consequently believed in negotiation and that all parties to a dispute should be represented. However, China policy under Webb was also flexible enough to realise that Chinese actions were partly responsible for the frosty Western reception to their claims for recognition. Therefore Webb, who was noticeably more positive and receptive toward recognition than his predecessors, was determined to steer a course somewhere in between “perverse procrastination” and “undue haste”.²¹

Webb was not content to locate New Zealand policy safely in behind the US line and he continued to advocate an early reconsideration of the main China policy issues. While acknowledging that Communist China had to work its way in to the good graces of the UN by demonstrating its good faith, he felt deferring the issue indefinitely was no longer the correct option. The views espoused in February 1951 foreshadowed the approach Webb would take on China questions when he became the Minister of External Affairs.

Webb felt that in continually postponing consideration of the recognition and UN admission questions, a real opportunity was being lost to lessen international tensions, and indeed to split the two Communist superpowers.²² In October 1951 he lamented the fact that all nations had not recognised “a couple of years ago”.²³ Webb felt that New Zealand had followed the American line too closely on China policy and his preference was for the

²⁰ McGibbon, *Korean War*, pp. 105, 340.

²¹ *NZPD*, 299 (1953), p. 450.

²² Extract: Agenda for 6th Session General Assembly - New Zealand Views Number 3 (Credentials Committee) - Chinese Representation, 23 October 1951, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

²³ *Ibid.*

traditional British approach of a less confrontational position toward Peking.²⁴ He was unconvinced as to the appropriateness of the US line and warned against undue delay, feeling this would “serve to strengthen the ties that unhappily exist between Communist China and the USSR”.²⁵

The Prime Minister, Sidney Holland, sought to temper Webb’s call for an early reconsideration by suggesting the West should defer consideration of the question until satisfied of China’s peaceful intentions in its attitude to international relations. However, Webb rejected this approach, suggesting recognition could be a method of ensuring peaceful behaviour. After all, in accepting the United Nations Charter, Communist China would be explicitly pledging herself to abide by Charter provisions on not resorting to aggression to resolve international disputes. Webb did not see how “anything more could, with propriety, be asked of her as a condition of the admission of her representatives”.²⁶ In August 1953 Webb told Leslie Munro, the New Zealand Ambassador to the United States and UN Representative, that he would feel obliged to go along with a majority vote admitting the PRC to the United Nations, even if the US were opposed to it.²⁷

Webb felt that Communist control on the Chinese mainland would have to be accepted and, therefore, Chiang was not a realistic voice for all Chinese in the international community:

After all, the Communist Government was in effective control of the Chinese mainland. It was ridiculous to maintain the fiction that Chiang Kai-shek on the island of

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ *Dominion, Evening Post, New Zealand Herald*, 18 June 1953; File Note, 19 June 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

²⁶ MinEA to NZHCLon (NZ Prime Minister), 25 June 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

²⁷ MinEA to NZAmWash, 6 August 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 9.

Formosa could be regarded as being [the] representative of 460 million Chinese²⁸.

Further evidence of Webb's conviction can be seen in his reaction to Munro's attempts in the US to counter the Minister's statements.²⁹ Munro may have felt a need to reassure the Americans as the Ambassador knew that the Government's advisers were at "6s and 7s"³⁰ in regard to the seemingly opposite approaches favoured by Webb and his Prime Minister.³¹ Webb reminded Munro that New Zealand Government representatives should have more regard for New Zealand rather than American public opinion.³² Webb did pick up a suggestion of Munro's in indicating publicly that China's performance at the Geneva talks on Korea and Indo-China would act as a barometer of Chinese good faith.³³ Holland expressed similar sentiments.³⁴

That Webb remained true to this belief was revealed upon his return from the Geneva Conference in July 1954. Webb argued in a 6 July Parliamentary statement that non-recognition was an impediment to the reduction of international tension.³⁵ He claimed that the constructive role played by the Chinese delegation at Geneva made it difficult to deny Peking recognition and UN admission. Webb also openly speculated on the future of the Nationalists in the UN if the Communists were admitted. This was really the first such official airing of the matter in New Zealand. So too was the suggestion of dual representation as a possible solution, a suggestion that received some

²⁸ File Note, 15 June 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

²⁹ NZAmWash to MinEA, 6 August 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 9.

³⁰ SecEA to NZAmWash, 6 August 1953, NL: Munro Papers, folder 6.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² MinEA to NZAmWash, 20 August 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 9.

³³ *NZPD*, 299 (1953), p. 450.

³⁴ *NZPD*, 300 (1953), p. 1556.

³⁵ *NZPD*, 303 (1954), p. 212.

support from the press and the Government's advisers.³⁶ However, official American and Australian reactions were an amalgam of astonishment, concern, and rejection.³⁷ Some support for Webb's comments emanated from Geneva, particularly from non-US officials and the press there. The New Zealand delegation reported that "very few countries are in a position vis-a-vis the United States to state what almost everyone believes to be commonsense".³⁸

Webb's statement provoked a flurry of calls for explanation to the New Zealand Government. Essentially, the explanation given was that it was the Minister's intent to publicly air the matter and this had been instigated by the conciliatory character of the Communist delegation at Geneva. However, it was not intended to be a commitment to action. Webb said that his main purpose

was to have the subject ventilated. I felt that what I said needed to be said, though I fully realise that, in the present temper, we are not likely to get much change. The problem is still one of timing, and it is one thing to state one's views and another 'to cross the Rubicon' as it were, so far as our American allies are concerned. However, I am firmly convinced that the non-admission of red China is tending to keep up international tension and that, consequently, it is time we began to think of ways and means of overcoming the practical difficulties of achieving this objective - not the least problem being the emotionalism that seems to abound in the U.S.A.³⁹

³⁶ *Dominion*, 20 July 1954; File Note by United Nations Section, DEA, 21 July 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10, Pamphlet in File - 'Two China's?', (not dated c. 1954), NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 11.

³⁷ *Current Notes on International Affairs*, July 1954, p. 467; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 July 1954.

³⁸ New Zealand Delegation to Conference on Indo-China, Geneva to MinEA, 19 July 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10.

³⁹ MinEA to MinEACan, 6 August 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10.

For Webb the negative approach appeared to be driving Peking closer to Moscow.⁴⁰ He felt “there was a good prospect” that the Chinese could be detached from the Soviets if the PRC were given a seat in the UN.⁴¹ Webb argued that the great menace facing the West was Communism, but felt it was better to confront it with diplomatic, rather than military, methods. Webb referred in his speech on 6 July 1954 to the British belief that difficulties existed between the two great Communist powers and that the West should endeavour to exploit these.⁴² The expression of this belief further distanced Webb from the US perception of a monolithic international Communist movement, which was also the prevailing view within his own party. Webb’s promotion of a change in approach was probably aimed at his own party colleagues rather than the Americans.

The idea of separating Peking from Moscow was not a new notion. It had formed a significant part of China policy discussion in the first ANZUS Council meeting of August 1952 in Honolulu. At that meeting, which was Webb’s “first important mission overseas”,⁴³ the Council partners attributed much of the regional instability in South East Asia to the union between the USSR and Communist China, and felt the management of international Communist expansion/aggression emanated from Moscow. The Japanese threat in the region was also downgraded, leaving the PRC as the most likely perceived threat to the partners’ security. This evaluation was based on the perception of Chinese intentions and also its involvement with the USSR in the international Communist movement.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Report from Cabinet Meeting on Geneva Conference, 26 May 1954, NA: PM 101/2/18/1 Part 1.

⁴¹ *Ibid*; see also Extract from a speech by Mr C. Baker, Chairman, Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation to shareholders, 11 March 1955, NA: NP, 0505.

⁴² *NZPD*, 303 (1954), p. 213.

⁴³ Belshaw, p. 160.

⁴⁴ Australia, New Zealand, United States Pacific Security Council, First Meeting, Honolulu, August 1952, NA: PM 111/3/3/10 Part 1.

The Council made its first objective the changing of what was perceived to be Peking's expansive and aggressive foreign policy. It was thought it may have been possible to get a degree of Chinese detachment from the USSR. However, in the international environment of 1952 this was seen as unlikely to be successful. Consequently the allies would instead concentrate on the containment of expansion and deterrence from aggression.⁴⁵

Essentially this was a plan to modify the character of the Chinese Communist regime and aimed to drive a wedge between the two great Communist powers by identifying "possible areas of friction"⁴⁶. Perceived obstacles to this policy were the character, and strength of position, of the Communists in China and that regime's dependence on the USSR, particularly in the supply of war materials. The Council did offer some comfort in that it did not foresee a direct Chinese threat to New Zealand. This was mainly because China had not developed a particularly dangerous naval capacity - an assessment which did not include Russian forces. Therefore, the immediate threat posed by China was to states that the Chinese could get to by land.⁴⁷

The argument for a reconsideration of China policy also received support from within New Zealand. Some press comment contained support for Webb's statements, while also emphasising the traditional British approach to the recognition issue. This commentary included the suggestion that there could be no settlement in the Far East without recognition of the PRC,⁴⁸ and that all efforts to encourage a "Tito regime" in China should be utilised if it meant that a detachment from the USSR could ensue.⁴⁹ The *Southland Times* declared that the Government was following "an unrealistic and unreasonable

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid, examples of identified areas included Inner Mongolia, Manchuria, and even Korea.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ *Dominion*, 19 January 1953.

⁴⁹ *Dominion*, *Evening Post*, *New Zealand Herald*, *Otago Daily Times*, 18 June 1953.

policy in refusing to recognise Communist China".⁵⁰ There was also a belief that if negotiations for an armistice in Korea proved successful then the policy of denying Peking entry to the United Nations would have to undergo serious reconsideration.⁵¹

The Department of External Affairs also gave impetus to the Webb line in declaring, "we should both accord at least de facto recognition to the Peking regime (leaving a blank around Formosa if necessary) and vote for the acceptance of the credentials of its recognized Government representative".⁵² According to the Department, this recognition should occur once the Chinese had "demonstrated their willingness"⁵³ to accept and respect international obligations. Three questions would then dictate New Zealand's approach to China policy issues: whether or not China had sufficiently "worked her passage"⁵⁴ to give recognition "the required cloak of moral respectability"⁵⁵; how New Zealand action could be calculated so as to ensure a maximum effect on US policy; and whether the recognition and United Nations admission questions should be treated *pari passu*, or as separate operations.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ *Southland Times*, 11 December 1952, while not a prominent paper nationally, this article does appear in official Government files, so the sentiment for re-consideration of the non-recognition policy was at least noted at the highest levels, see Extract: Airmail Bulletin, 11 December 1952, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

⁵¹ See *Dominion, Evening Post, New Zealand Herald*, 18 June 1953. An Armistice Agreement for Korea was signed on 27 July 1953. It did give some hope for a lessening of tension which could, conceivably, have led to a modification in New Zealand's attitude toward recognition. However, for the remainder of 1953 the difficulties encountered in the observation of the terms of the Armistice, the failure to obtain the Political Conference called for in the Agreement, and the hardened attitude of the US that resulted from treatment and disposal of POWs hindered any move towards recognition of the Peking regime.

⁵² File Note by Wilson and UN Section, DEA, 23 July 1954, 9th Regular Session of the General Assembly - Provisional Agenda, 24 August 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10.

⁵³ Memorandum: Recognition of Communist China, 7 July 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14 I Part 10.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

The Department's view was that Webb's arguments were tantamount to taking a position in favour of recognition. In some respects External Affairs agreed with Webb in commenting that "sooner or later Chinese Communist representatives"⁵⁷ would take their place in the United Nations. If New Zealand argued that the cessation of hostilities in Korea, the Indo-China settlement, and the apparently conciliatory disposition of the PRC for short-term peaceful co-existence justified re-visiting the question of Chinese representation in the United Nations, then this would argue in favour of re-examining the position on recognition as well. Thus the recognition and United Nations admission questions would be treated *pari passu*.⁵⁸

The perception of Peking's behaviour in international relations during this period was a further factor identified by those advocating a reconsideration. It was seen in Webb's upbeat attitude toward the China question on his return from Geneva in 1954. Both the Minister of External Affairs and the Prime Minister had gone on record prior to the conference that China's performance there would be a demonstration of its good faith.⁵⁹ Webb had been particularly impressed with Chou En-lai and this appeared to reinvigorate his argument for reconsideration of the recognition question, made most visibly in Parliament on 6 July 1954.⁶⁰ Initially, Webb's conduct at Geneva seemed to indicate that he felt China's behaviour had not fulfilled the stated conditions for a more favourable disposition on the question of UN admission and recognition. He said:

The first qualification for admission to membership of any society is willingness to uphold its principles and abide by its rules... neither by its words nor its actions has [the

⁵⁷ File Note by Wilson and UN Section, DEA, 23 July 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Par 10.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *NZPD*, 299 (1953), p. 450; 300 (1953), p. 1556.

⁶⁰ *EAR*, 4:4 (1954), pp. 15-16; *NZPD*, 303 (1954), p. 212.

PRC] yet given any evidence that it could be relied upon to fulfil this elemental qualification.⁶¹

However, Webb's position evolved very quickly once he began to appreciate the views of other participants at Geneva. By July Webb was again more positive, claiming that "the absence of China from the United Nations [was] preventing.. a lessening of international tension".⁶² Webb's public statements were seemingly taking New Zealand policy further away from the US line, as his approach was, in effect, critical of the American attitude. Webb was cognisant of the need to restrain the US from taking action at Geneva which could escalate the situation in the Far East, particularly in regard to China, but at the same time he wanted to maintain US interest in a region which was becomingly increasingly important to New Zealand security perceptions. However, the New Zealand view of the US approach to the Geneva deliberations was less than flattering. Webb told Cabinet in late May that while he realised the Americans had difficulties in making any change to its policy, he felt this policy was only driving the PRC closer to the USSR.⁶³

McIntosh, who led the New Zealand delegation at Geneva after Webb departed in May, was more direct in his criticism of the US delegates and their approach at Geneva. He commented that they had trouble keeping mental pace with Chou and he found the American's to be "inflexible", "clumsy", and "not bright", leading to his general impression that the US had "mishandled" the conference.⁶⁴ McIntosh believed that the Americans had succeeded in conveying to the Chinese that they were intent upon the aggressive overthrow

⁶¹ Report from Cabinet Meeting on Geneva Conference, 26 May 1954, NA: PM 101/2/18/1 Part I.

⁶² *NZPD*, 303 (1954), p. 212.

⁶³ Report from Cabinet Meeting on Geneva Conference, 26 May 1954, NA: PM 101/2/18/1 Part I.

⁶⁴ SecEA to MinEA, 16 June 1954, NA: PM 101/2/18/1 Part 1.

of the Chinese Communist regime, and the first step in the achievement of this goal was to block a viable settlement of Korean issues at Geneva.⁶⁵

Frank Corner, who was also at Geneva, commented that it was difficult not to be negative about the US approach there, but felt the US Government was imprisoned by American public opinion, and attitudes within Congress toward Peking.⁶⁶ This, Corner felt, influenced and dominated US conduct at Geneva, and it really served to distance the Americans from an ally like New Zealand.⁶⁷ McIntosh summarised this feeling very early in July for the Government:

Neither the United States nor South Korea ever wanted to negotiate in the sense that they were prepared to make any concessions. It was our side as much as the other who were unreasonable. One of the main reasons for failure was the complete inability of our side to agree on a common policy.⁶⁸

New Zealand was also dissatisfied with elements of US policy in the Offshore Islands dispute. By the time the dispute had developed in the Straits between mainland China and Formosa in September 1954, the wisdom of the delay in recognition and United Nations admission was seemingly confirmed, as the PRC was again characterised as an aggressor in an international crisis. However, Webb in particular was concerned at the potential for a major Sino-American conflict and the consequences for New Zealand security. The New Zealand Government spent much time trying to prevent the US from taking action which could see the crisis worsen. Obviously the Government felt it was in New Zealand's security interests to prevent a deterioration of the situation, but its actions were also influenced by the New Zealand domestic

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Corner to SecEA, 16 June 1954, NA: PM 101/2/18/1 Part 1.

⁶⁷ Report of Situation, 11 May 1954, NA: PM 324/2/2 Part 1.

⁶⁸ McIntosh File Note, 1 July 1954, NA: PM 101/2/18/1 Part 1.

scene, where press criticism of US policy was increasing and a general election was looming.⁶⁹

News of the proposed US-ROC Mutual Defence treaty in October further exacerbated this concern.⁷⁰ It was felt that it was not in New Zealand's best interests to have the US guaranteeing the Offshore Islands, as New Zealand clearly made a distinction between defending Formosa and defending the Offshore Islands, which it believed belonged to the PRC. Furthermore, the extension of the Treaty beyond Formosa to the Offshore Islands was deemed too antagonistic to the PRC and could see New Zealand involved in a larger conflict through the ANZUS connection.⁷¹

Initially New Zealand's reasons for becoming involved in this crisis were twofold: to enhance national prestige through being seen to take the initiative on the Security Council; and to promote closer and more harmonious Anglo-American relations. These reasons evolved as New Zealand began to appreciate the seriousness and potential implications of the dispute and the intractable positions of the protagonists. Thus, New Zealand's motives to quieten the dispute became devoted toward preventing the crisis from developing into a larger more dangerous conflict. For these reasons New Zealand sought to take the lead in the UN to prevent US actions outside of the United Nations from further exacerbating the situation. In the New Zealand view, the US had entered dangerous territory by concluding the MDT. The Treaty would leave a permanent issue of argument in the crisis and could be a major hurdle to an eventual resolution. A formal commitment to the ROC would seem a point of no return because it was more difficult to change a formal treaty commitment, especially in the light of the strong

⁶⁹ Memorandum for Official Secretary, NZHCLon, 10 November 1954, NA: PM 264/3/2/1 Part 5.

⁷⁰ NZPRUN to MinEA, 14 October 1954, NA: PM 264/3/2 Part 1.

⁷¹ MinEA to NZHCLon, 18 October 1954, NA: PM 264/3/2 Part 1.

'Taiwan lobby' in US politics. Wellington found comfort in the knowledge that this was also Britain's view.⁷²

Webb was adamant that he would not commit New Zealand actively to oppose an attempt by the PRC to gain possession of the Offshore Islands, even Formosa. Webb felt he could "not take the responsibility of committing the Government so far".⁷³ Wellington was also not prepared to act without Britain's support, and this was questionable, given London's discontent over the MDT.

MAINTAINING THE EXISTING POLICY LINE

The foremost of the reasons which dictated the maintenance of the existing policy was concern for the American perspective which saw policy fall into line behind the approach favoured by the US. This factor was reinforced by the development of formal alliance relations with the US, by anti-Communist feeling within New Zealand and by Canberra. In particular Australia stressed the importance of not offending Washington over China policy questions. This emphasis was seen in Holland's attitude, publicly and privately, and he appeared anxious to rein in Webb so as to placate American sensitivities. A further reason mitigating against the softened attitude was the perception of Peking as aggressive, not only in Korea but also in the Offshore Islands dispute. These perceptions served to strengthen the sense of threat from Communist China, therefore, officials were sensitive to the possibility that anything akin to appeasement would encourage Chinese Communist aggression and expansion.

Against the Webb argument was the fact that he assumed the ministerial post during a period in which American attitudes and perspective's were particularly influential in policy formation. It was a time when the PRC had

⁷² NZHCLon to MinEA, 15 October 1954, NA: PM 264/3/2 Part 1.

⁷³ Memorandum: MinEA to SecEA, 20 October 1954, NA: PM 254/3/2 Part 1.

been declared an aggressor in Korea by the UN on 1 February,⁷⁴ and American opinion was further hardening against Communist China. The US Administration, which was facing increasing domestic political pressure to stand up to Communist aggression, made a number of unequivocal statements ruling out recognition and UN admission. The hardened US attitude was noted in Wellington in May when a departmental assessment concluded that due to this attitude and New Zealand's security requirements China policy should get in line behind the US perspective.⁷⁵ It did this, particularly once the ANZUS Treaty was signed in September.

The regard for the US perspective was seen initially in Doidge's reaction to Webb's remarks in February 1951. Prior Anzac consultations had concluded that movement towards recognition of the Communists, and de-recognition of the Nationalists, could prejudice the efforts to obtain the desired US security guarantee.⁷⁶ Therefore Webb's apparent deviation from stated policy was clearly embarrassing to Doidge during a delicate stage of negotiation with the US for the Pacific Pact.

Doidge's concern was probably also heightened because of the knowledge that American opinion was hardening against Communist China.⁷⁷ Along with the departmental paper in May, Wellington was also learning of the US attitude from Leslie Munro: "in this country recognition of Communist China is absolutely politically impossible and not even to be thought of.. for the United States, recognition has come to imply moral approbation".⁷⁸ The increasing pressure being brought to bear on the US Administration from

⁷⁴ SecEA to Comptroller of Customs, 10 March 1953, NA: PM 40/11/1 Part 1.

⁷⁵ File Note, 25 May 1951, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 7.

⁷⁶ File Note: Anzac Consultations, Sydney, 2 February 1951, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 6; *Evening Post*, 15 February 1951; *Southern Cross*, 16 February 1951.

⁷⁷ See for example, Report Number 463 of 82nd Congress, First Session in House of Representatives from Committee on Foreign Affairs: Opposing Admission of Communist China to Membership in the United Nations, 15 May 1951, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 7.

⁷⁸ NZAmWash to MinEA, 12 May 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

'McCarthyite' and 'Taiwan Lobby' pressure groups was also seen to be manifested in statements ruling out the possibility of recognition or support for Peking's entry into the United Nations.

The official desire to move in behind the American line was incorporated into departmental assessments. In the evaluation of likely US reactions to recognition it was noted that it would run against US policy which, "in the last resort the security of the Pacific countries largely depends". This was prior to the signing of ANZUS. Once that Treaty was signed in September and Webb was the Minister, he was well aware of the need to qualify his own comments so as to align New Zealand's actual position with this new formal commitment.

Evidence that this was occurring was seen in October when Webb said that while the claims of the PRC were strong for representation in the UN, they had been the architects of their own downfall with their actions in Korea.⁷⁹ Briefs for the New Zealand delegation to Korea in November 1952⁸⁰ and for the Prime Minister's Meeting in May 1953⁸¹ held to the same line, but came under the influence of the Webb argument a little by looking ahead to what might happen after a Korean armistice and suggesting that New Zealand's continued opposition to PRC participation in the United Nations, or to recognition, could not be taken for granted.⁸²

The desire to remain in accord with the US perspective can be seen in the ANZUS connection. New Zealand's perceptions of Chinese intentions in South East Asia led it to examine this alliance connection in terms of the

⁷⁹ Extract: Agenda for Sixth Session, UN General Assembly, 16 October 1951, 23 October 1951, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

⁸⁰ File Note: NZDel to Korea - China, 1 November 1952, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

⁸¹ PMM, London, June 1953, Arguments for and against recognition, 1 May 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

⁸² Extract: Agenda for Sixth Session, UNGA, 16 October 1951, 23 October 1951, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

defensive organisation of the region. Even though South East Asia was not the particular province of the pact, the fact that Communist China was evaluated as a threat to Australia and New Zealand meant Chinese intentions were a factor under consideration in ANZUS discussions.⁸³ The ANZUS Council meeting in August 1952 concluded that the West's relationship with China conditioned "all"⁸⁴ Pacific defence planning, and that the problem of maintaining peace and security in the Pacific region was hindered by the influence and collusion of the international Communist movement in an already unstable region.

New Zealand was further informed as to the American line of thought on China policy issues in June 1953 when Robert Scotten,⁸⁵ the US ambassador to New Zealand, called on Webb. Scotten told the latter that the US would not regard the conclusion of an armistice in Korea as sufficient justification for a softening of its position. However, Scotten did say that the probable US tactic in opposition to Chinese admission would be to use procedural delays to defer consideration of the question rather than direct opposition. This was supposedly in deference to the attitudes of other nations.⁸⁶ After seeing Scotten, Webb consulted with the Prime Minister and Cabinet and reassured the US ambassador that New Zealand would not raise the question of Chinese representation and would adhere with the American procedural delay formula in the meantime.

Webb then relayed the text of his reply to Scotten to the Prime Minister.⁸⁷ Holland "entirely" agreed with the central line of Webb's argument which suggested that New Zealand should not be pushed into recognition merely

⁸³ DEA Information Paper, 29 July 1952, NA: PM 264/4/8 Part 1.

⁸⁴ Australia, New Zealand, United States Pacific Security Council, First Meeting, Honolulu, August 1952, NA: PM 111/3/3/10 Part 1.

⁸⁵ Robert Scotten, US Ambassador in New Zealand, 1948-1955.

⁸⁶ File Note: (Webb's meeting with Scotten), Untitled Memorandum: (a first draft of Webb's reply to Scotten), 15 June 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

⁸⁷ MinEA to NZHCLon (NZ Prime Minister), 17 June 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

because an armistice had been signed in Korea, but that both recognition and UN admission could well be forced upon New Zealand sooner rather than later. In his reply to Webb, Holland concentrated on the importance of timing, maintaining that New Zealand should not be rushed into a decision as they needed to be satisfied of China's peaceful intentions in Korea and elsewhere. Holland was also chary of a decision to award the Chinese seat to the PRC in the light of its aggression in Korea where she was "killing thousands of Americans and other United Nations soldiers".⁸⁸

The Department of External Affairs further reinforced the importance of the American perspective in July 1954. While Webb's argument favoured "rolling up the bamboo curtain"⁸⁹, it was felt this would mean little unless it helped produce "a less intransigent attitude in the United States"⁹⁰. Thus it was felt New Zealand's best course was to remain "with the Americans to push, rather than going ahead to drag"⁹¹. The Department also remained cognisant of American sensitivities in the voting advice given for the Ninth UN General Assembly. The directive was again to support deferral of consideration of the question as it was accepted that New Zealand could not at that stage be seen to be departing from the American perspective. It was acknowledged that the US would "be disturbed if we either recognise the Peking Government or vote for the acceptance of the credentials of its representative. This is the main fact of life that we have to face up to"⁹². It was felt little would be lost in giving

⁸⁸ NZHCLon (NZ Prime Minister) to MinEA, 20 June 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

⁸⁹ Memorandum: Recognition of Communist China, 7 July 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² File Note: UN Section, DEA and Wilson, 23 July 1954, Ninth Regular Session of the General Assembly - Provisional Agenda, 24 August 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10.

the Communists further “time to prove themselves”⁹³, and the US attitude further time to soften.

That recognition and UN admission was an absolute anathema to the US Government was further reinforced to New Zealand later in the period. The *Otago Daily Times* reported a direct condemnation of Communist China by President Eisenhower.⁹⁴ In this instance the Government were left in little doubt as to the determinedly negative attitude of the US to Peking’s admission to the UN. The President and members of Congress even suggested that if the PRC were admitted the US would contemplate withdrawal from that body.⁹⁵ The poor prospects for the UN’s effective operation without American involvement were acknowledged in official circles, and in the press.⁹⁶

Accordingly New Zealand’s UN policy in regard to the Chinese representation question came into line behind the US perspective. Webb, qualifying his 6 July statement, went on to say that recognition and UN admission was not something to be done quickly, and the reason for this was the attitude of the US: “it was not easy to bring about the admission of China because there are great emotional difficulties to overcome in the United States. We have to take account of that... that there are difficulties”.⁹⁷ McIntosh outlined similar sentiments to the State Department, which had complained that Webb’s comments seemed in contravention to the agreed policy of the ANZUS Communique of the previous year.⁹⁸ McIntosh said that New Zealand was fully aware of the terms of the communique and that his Government had little

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Otago Daily Times*, 9 July 1954.

⁹⁵ *Otago Daily Times*, 5, 9 July 1954.

⁹⁶ *Evening Post* (Editorial), 7 July 1954; McIntosh File Note, 8 July 1954, MinEA to NZAmWash, 9 July 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10.

⁹⁷ *NZPD*, 300 (1954), p. 300.

⁹⁸ NZAmWash to MinEA, 8 July 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10.

desire to give recognition while the situation in South East Asia was still unresolved.⁹⁹

The Australians were also mindful that the US should not be offended in a favourable movement toward recognition. Comments by Menzies in New Zealand just days after Webb made the 6 July speech in Parliament, confirmed this. Menzies emphasised that Australia's attitude to the question of Chinese recognition and UN admission had not changed and was unlikely to. He maintained Peking's future was a non-issue in Canberra.¹⁰⁰ Casey,¹⁰¹ while in New Zealand for discussions with Webb in early July, reiterated this line, saying that Australia would not consider the question of Peking's admission to the UN while unsure of Chinese intentions.¹⁰²

Holland was a further restraining influence against the reconsideration argument, and therefore a reason why the policy was maintained. Holland was mindful that Webb's statements did not in practice distance New Zealand policy from the American perspective. Holland, despite obvious pro-Britain sentiments, was also quite comfortable with the US¹⁰³ and this was seen on the recognition issue in his desire to publicly associate New Zealand's recognition position with the US line:

The American point of view is important, and we should endeavour not to embarrass her in view of the strongly expressed opinion there against anything Communistic. I therefore suggest that our line should be ultimate

⁹⁹ McIntosh File Note, 8 July 1954, SecEA to Counsellor, 12 August 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10.

¹⁰⁰ *Current Notes on International Affairs*, July 1954, p. 467; File Note: 'Red China', Comments by the NZPM (in Australia) at a Press Conference, 20 August 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10.

¹⁰¹ Casey, [Baron] Richard Gardiner, 1890-1976, Australian MP, 1931-40, 1949-60; AusMinEA, 1951-60; created Life Peer, 1960; Governor-General of Australia, 1965-69.

¹⁰² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 July 1954.

¹⁰³ McGibbon, *Korean War*, pp. 193-194, 203-204, 211-212, 330; McKinnon, pp. 95, 101, 114-115.

recognition of Communist China is inescapable, but we cannot even consider the timing of such recognition until all invading troops have left Korea and until the United Nations is satisfied concerning China's peaceful intentions in other areas.¹⁰⁴

It does appear Holland was moving to rein in Webb, as instructions to his Minister in September 1953 suggested that he make no further statements to confuse the New Zealand position in regard to the Americans.¹⁰⁵ In response Webb dispensed with plans to set out his position in a general debate statement. Holland's instructions to Webb would also tend to cast some doubt on the validity of the Prime Minister's comments in the House on 18 September when he denied that New Zealand's policy was linked to the US perspective.¹⁰⁶ The instructions to Webb would tend to suggest that it was Holland who wanted to follow the US line, certainly more so than Webb.

With two of New Zealand's closest and influential allies making unequivocal public pronouncements as to their attitudes on China policy questions, Holland was anxious to reassure the Americans and Australians,

I wish to say, so that there may be no ambiguity about the matter, that some of the forces of this country have been engaged in hostilities in which amongst their enemies have been Chinese Communists. I don't discuss recognition of my enemy while I am in the field with him.¹⁰⁷

This was also the message to American ambassador Scotten on 14 July, when Webb, with Holland, explained the New Zealand position. Both asked the ambassador to convey to Dulles New Zealand's "real position... and to explain that New Zealand would not vote for admission of Communist China

¹⁰⁴ NZHCLon (NZ Prime Minister) to MinEA, 20 June 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

¹⁰⁵ NZ Prime Minister to MinEA, 14 September 1953, McIntosh to Shanahan, 17 September 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 9.

¹⁰⁶ *NZPD*, 300 (1953), p. 1328 (Holland).

¹⁰⁷ File Note: 'Red China', Comments by the NZPM at a Press Conference, 20 August 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10.

at [the] forthcoming Assembly".¹⁰⁸ Webb had clarified his 6 July speech two days later in Parliament by declaring the approach he advocated would not be easily achievable.¹⁰⁹ This clarification was most probably at the Prime Minister's urging, certainly he received a "rap on the knuckles"¹¹⁰ from Holland.

The New Zealand Government's attitude is that since 1950, by their overt assistance to the North Korean forces, the Chinese Communists have for the time being forfeited any claims to recognition. New Zealand continues to recognise the Nationalist Government of Chiang Kai-shek.¹¹¹

Whatever the legal theory of recognition may be, the North Korean aggression had made it more difficult to consider recognising China; Chinese aggression made it for all practical purposes impossible.¹¹²

As the above quotations illustrate the perception of Chinese aggression, or support for aggression, in Korea, Indo-China and Tibet was another factor against the reconsideration argument. Latterly the Offshore Islands Crisis was also seen at least partly in this light. Associated with this interpretation was a belief that anything akin to appeasement, such as recognition, could conceivably encourage Chinese aggression. This was in some way a throwback to Fraser's reasons for establishing the non-recognition policy. Part of the rationale for this assessment was the belief that recognition could undermine the confidence of non-Communist governments in the region, in terms of those governments' capacity, and the West's, to contain Communist

¹⁰⁸ MinEA to NZAmWash, 16 July 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10.

¹⁰⁹ *NZPD*, 300 (1954), p. 300.

¹¹⁰ Belshaw, p. 184.

¹¹¹ File Note: NZDel to Korea - China, 1 November 1952, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

¹¹² PMM, London, June 1953, Arguments for and against Recognition, 1 May 1953, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

expansion and aggression or, as Wade described it, “discourage the forces of democracy”¹¹³.

Later in September the departmental recommendation was for New Zealand to maintain its non-recognition stance for the remainder of 1954.¹¹⁴ This recommendation drew upon the tenets of the United Nations Charter and Communist China’s alleged failure to conduct its external affairs by the principles inherent in that document. It also argued that the wisdom of delay had been shown in developments in the Straits between mainland China and Formosa in September.¹¹⁵ New Zealand became involved in the crisis over the Chinese Offshore Islands in 1954 because it was on the Security Council at the time. After the Communist victory on the mainland in 1949, many Nationalists fled to the relative safety of islands off the Pacific coast of China. The PRC began shelling the Nationalist-held island of Quemoy early in September 1954, beginning the Offshore Islands crisis, which lasted until May 1955.

CONCLUSIONS

Having confirmed its intention to continue with the non-recognition approach in the early stages of its tenure, National maintained this approach between 1951 and 1954. This was despite the inclinations of some officials to reconsider the question. Throughout this period statements were made which advocated a reconsideration of non-recognition and non-admission to the UN. Essentially, these questioned the wisdom of keeping Communist China out of the established international diplomatic community and suggested benefits if the policy line were changed, the statements by Webb in February 1951 and July 1954 to Parliament are examples. However, there was no actual change

¹¹³ Wade File Note, 12 December 1950, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 6; File Note, 25 May 1951, NA: PM 264/3/14 Part 7; PMM, London June 1953: Arguments for and against recognition, 1 May 1953, NA : PM 264/3/14 Part 8.

¹¹⁴ File Note, 24 September 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

of policy which in practice meant the negative position was maintained on recognition and New Zealand continued to vote against Peking's admission to the UN.

This chapter has identified a number of reasons why there was an inclination to reconsider the non-recognition policy during this period. The foremost of these was Clifton Webb. As a personality in this discussion Webb is vital as a reason by himself, because it was his opinion and favoured approach which gave impetus to the reconsideration argument. Webb's elevated position as Minister of External Affairs meant he was the most visible advocate for change. However, there is a need to distinguish between Webb himself, and his statements, public and private, on China policy. When he said that non-recognition had increased international tensions, or that Peking could be detached from Moscow, or that the Chinese Communists were conciliatory and open to dialogue this had an effect on domestic opinion but it also linked him publicly with Britain's approach, and tended to place him offside with Washington. The closeness of Webb's view to Britain's approach gave the reconsideration argument credibility as New Zealand was still very close to Britain, it also meant that there was some comfort in a suggestion which was obviously in contradiction to the American view. The reconsideration argument also found further comfort in a more favourable perception of Chinese behaviour. It was felt that the apparent display of conciliation by the Chinese delegation at Korea in 1954 was evidence that not only could they be dealt with amicably but that they could be separated from the Soviets. Finally, the perception that Washington was being too aggressive in its haste to confront 'the other side' during the Korean War and subsequent peace conference and latterly over the Offshore Islands was also an argument pushed. The US' aggressive response to China policy issues focussed the reconsideration argument and led it to promote the idea that this approach could lead to large scale war with grave consequences for New Zealand security.

It was felt that Peking would only respect a show of force and the best means of deterring its aggressive intents was not to appease them. If Peking were

forced to prove her good intentions in lieu of recognition then its aggression would not be rewarded. This would also prove a good example to the non-Communist governments' in South East Asia and could conceivably aid in those governments' resistance to Communist aggression. Preceding chapters' have underscored the American factor somewhat, however, this chapter has emphasised concern for the American perspective as a maintaining reason more strongly. Between 1951 and 1954 the foreign policy imperative of procuring and sustaining American protection was an overriding factor in the maintenance of the non-recognition approach, because the negative line was also strongly favoured by the US. It was felt that if the US were willing to underwrite New Zealand security then there was an obligation to follow that nation's lead in international issues. Importantly too, the Australians were also promoting the importance of following the American line and this influence should not be underestimated. Thus pragmatism dominated, and ultimately triumphed over, the Webbian line because all issues were subordinate to the need for maintaining an effective relationship with the US. Holland in particular was mindful to stress the importance of the US shield, to New Zealand and the Commonwealth. The American contribution to New Zealand security entitled that nation to respect for her views. Cognisance of this reality meant that a small nation like New Zealand had to adopt a more circumspect China policy approach, due to its dependence on American favour.

Chapter Five

1954-1957

Non-recognition Confirmed

This final chapter is concerned with the approach to China policy questions during the later stages of the National Government between 1954 and 1957. Following an initial preliminary section surveying China policy during this period, the chapter then turns to an exploration of factors behind the reversion back to a more negative and hardened attitude toward Communist China between 1954 and 1957. As the National Government's tenure in office entered its twilight, there was still some questioning of the merits of continuing with the non-recognition and non-admission stance from within government ranks, the Opposition, and in the Department of External Affairs, but the Government itself stood firmly against any reconsideration. This was seen in the Government's public statements during this period, and in New Zealand's advocacy of Commonwealth solidarity with the US on China policy at Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conferences in 1955, 1956, and 1957. The reasons for this firming of policy are dealt with in the second section of this chapter. Essentially the most significant China policy determinant was the perceived need to retain American cooperation in New Zealand's security planning, although other factors, including the replacement of Webb with Thomas Macdonald in the External Affairs portfolio also played a role.

CHINA POLICY BETWEEN 1954 AND 1957

While it was acknowledged within official circles that the time was approaching for a reconsideration on the recognition and UN admission questions it was not yet ripe.¹ The caution with which the Chinese Communist regime was viewed at this time was seen in official advice from Wellington when the Communist Chinese Charge' in London sent a letter to

¹ NZ Prime Minister Press Statement, 17 June 1955, NZ Prime Minister Statement in Parliament, 21 July 1955, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 11.

New Zealand's High Commission there, testing New Zealand's interest in recognition.² The suggestion was to refrain from any further contact while giving a cordial, though informal, letter of thanks for the communication.³ The Government's view was that the first step toward recognition and UN admission lay with the Chinese Communist Government itself. New Zealand required evidence that Peking wanted to "seek adjustment" through peaceful means in international disputes in which it was involved.⁴

In reality New Zealand's position between 1954 and 1957 had changed very little from earlier periods. Holland restated it in Parliament on 21 July 1955:

There has been no change in the attitude of this Government towards the admission of Communist China to the United Nations, but I think I am entitled to say that the day when it will be admitted is coming closer... There has to be a lapse of time and an indication of good behaviour.⁵

The brief for the New Zealand delegation to the tenth UN General Assembly expressed similar sentiments, and it was felt that while the PRC had stopped, for the time being, the policy of open aggression against other nations it had not stopped in its "campaign of subversion and infiltration. Indeed they are likely to accelerate it while at the same time pretending to be in favour of peaceful coexistence".⁶

The evolution away from the Webbian line was also seen in Macdonald's approach to the Offshore Islands dispute during late 1954 and 1955. Under Webb the crisis was seen as a Pacific problem with major regional

² NZHCLon to MinEA, 8 November 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10.

³ Memorandum: NZHCCan to SecEA, 17 November 1954, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 10.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ PMM, London, June 1956, Recognition of Communist China and Representation in the United Nations - DEA Briefing Paper, 22 May 1956, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 11.

⁶ 10th Regular Session of the General Assembly Provisional Agenda: Question of the Government Entitled to Represent China in the UN General Assembly, 25 August 1955, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 11.

consequences and there was little regard for the maintenance of Formosa in Nationalist hands.⁷ However, Macdonald made public statements which suggested that New Zealand was placing greater significance on the potential loss of Formosa to the Communists in terms of reduced Pacific security. In fact he declared that Wellington was “unalterably opposed to Formosa being handed to the Chinese Communists”⁸. There was an importance attached to Formosa hitherto unseen in New Zealand policy: “in free world strategy too, Formosa was kind of [a] Gibraltar in [the] Pacific for Western powers”⁹. Macdonald’s position was strengthened when Holland publicly endorsed his view that Formosa should stay with the West¹⁰.

In the remainder of the National Government’s time in office there was little variation from the negative line. It would appear, also, that National was committed to continuing with this approach had it secured another term, as the China policy statement approved for the Government’s election campaign in 1957 was in tone, less flexible than many earlier public statements on China policy issues.¹¹ Further evidence of this occurred at the 1957 Prime Minister’s Meeting where New Zealand expressed a hardened and negative attitude to other Commonwealth members on China policy. New Zealand relayed its main concerns with China were for its security and in the potential for aggressive Chinese Communist expansion in South East Asia.

New Zealand’s interests in this question are plain to see. Fully aware of the power and potentialities of China we must do what we can to halt Communist expansion in the Far East and South East Asia. Communist Chinese power must be resisted... Our record to date - united Nations

⁷ Memorandum: MinEA to SecEA, 20 October 1954, NA: PM 264/3/2 Part 1.

⁸ MinEA to NZPRUN, 9 February 1955, NA: PM 115/5/33/1 Part 1.

⁹ *EAR*, 4:12 (1954), p. 2; MinEA to NZPRUN, 9 February 1955, NA: PM 115/5/33/1 Part 1.

¹⁰ *NZPD*, 305 (1955), p. 15.

¹¹ Extract: Airmail Bulletin, November 1957, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 11.

action in Korea, ANZUS and SEATO - makes plain our understanding of this.¹²

CONTINUED CALLS FOR A RECONSIDERATION OF THE NON-RECOGNITION POLICY

The movement for a reconsideration in the non-recognition approach lost some momentum with the departure of Webb to the High Commission in London. However, there was still some pressure within Parliament and the Department of External Affairs for a move toward recognition during this final period between 1954 and 1957. These calls were not just coming from left-wing commentators and pressure groups, as there was, it would appear, a continuation of Liberal tendencies within the Government after Webb's departure. Duncan Rae, a Government backbencher, is perhaps the best example of this. Unlike Webb he was not convinced of Communist China's claim to UN representation.

My view is that up to the present time Communist China has given no indication that, if admitted to the [UN], she would abide by the rules of that body we cannot, as the Hon. Mr Webb used to say, allow a nation in arms against us and opposed in every way to the policy of the United Nations to shoot its way into [the UN].¹³

Rae was more interested in seeing Communist China diplomatically recognised,

...what should our attitude be toward Communist China? That question has been raised in this debate. I am one of those who believe that it would be realistic to recognise Chou En-lai's Government as the *de facto* ruler of China. That might have repercussions I do not understand, but there is no doubt that the Communists are in possession of the mainland of China. If we recognise them it would not necessarily mean that we approve of them, but that we

¹² PMM, London, June 1957 - China, 1 May 1957, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 12.

¹³ NZPD, 305 (1955), pp. 74-75.

held them responsible for what they did. That is the meaning of recognition.¹⁴

Not only did Rae receive some support in the House for his comments, in June the *Dominion* also backed his call for a reconsideration of the non-recognition policy.¹⁵

The Department of External Affairs also occasionally questioned the merit of following a negative policy line. Briefing papers', while continuing to make points on both sides of the debate, argued that "unless the Chinese Communists should adopt a more aggressive posture than they have now assumed, a policy of further delay in recognition next year will become increasingly unrealistic".¹⁶ The Department also believed that Peking was entitled to UN admission and recognition because there was

no doubt that the Peking regime exercises effective control over "practically the whole" of the national territory. After eight years during which it has consolidated its position, the Peking regime is acknowledged, even within the U.S. Government, as being firmly in control beyond any reasonable expectation of being ousted. It may therefore be regarded as fulfilling the condition requiring "a reasonable prospect of permanence".¹⁷

The moral argument against recognition, used earlier by the likes of Fraser, that the Communists could not be recognised as they had ascended through violent methods, and that the Nationalists were the victims of External ideological aggression was also felt to be weakened when viewed within practical and historical parameters:

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ *NZPD*, 305 (1955), pp. 120-121 (Anderton), p. 137 (Mason), p. 401 (Deas); *Dominion*, 18 June 1955.

¹⁶ PMM, London, June 1956, Recognition of Communist China and Representation in the United Nations - DEA Briefing Paper, 22 May 1956, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 11.

¹⁷ File Note: The Problem of China, 13 September 1957, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 12.

The attainment of power by force is not normally considered to be a bar to recognition: the United States itself is the product of a long and bitter revolutionary war; so is the republican form of government in France. A great many Latin American governments are the result of revolutions. In the case of China, both the National Government (in 1927) and the Central People's Government (in 1949) came to power by the same method: military conquest.¹⁸

It was also believed that “unless the effective Government of China” was represented in international forums, including the UN, when the resolution of Far Eastern problems was the topic of discussion, then any possible solutions would lack a viable utility or be hampered in their implementation “because the effective government of China has not been given the opportunity to participate and, therefore, to accept the decisions. This situation increases the prospects of tension in the Far East”.¹⁹ China's participation in the international community while not diminishing “the strength of the forces binding China to the Soviet Union” could, it was felt, help to “decrease” the level of reliance of Peking on Moscow.²⁰ With this in mind Department officials kept a hopeful watch on the pronouncements of the US and other friendly governments in case their policies changed.²¹

WHY CHINA POLICY HARDENED

A number of factors dictated that the policy approach toward China during this era would be more firmly negative than previously. The first of these was Webb's departure. This meant that the official voice for a softer attitude toward China lost its most vocal exponent. Coupled with Webb's departure was the approach favoured by his replacement Thomas Macdonald, who, in his public

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Two China's: Note for DEA Section Heads, 27 January 1956, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 11.

statements appeared less conciliatory toward Peking and closer to the US perspective. Concern for the American view was, as has been noted in previous chapters, a key aspect of Prime Minister Holland's attitude toward China, this perspective was also noted within the Department of External Affairs. Linked to the internal attitudes was the unfavourable perception of Chinese behaviour in the international community, notably during the Offshore Islands dispute. New Zealand's perceptions in this regard were backed by certain strategic evaluations, regarding not only the importance of Formosa and by association the Nationalist Chinese, but also in the continuing perception that Communist expansion needed to be contained and aggression could not be appeased. Thus Holland and Macdonald were happy to re-emphasise the ANZUS connection and commit New Zealand defence and security policy toward the Asia-Pacific region.

Thomas Macdonald's attitude to China policy questions was revealed in his approach to the Offshore Islands dispute. In this instance Macdonald moved to associate New Zealand's approach, publicly, with the US perspective that Formosa should not be conceded to Communist expansion. What changed under Macdonald was perhaps a higher regard for American strategic interpretations than had been emphasised by Webb. This approach revealed that Formosa was increasingly seen as significant in Wellington's view of Pacific security imperatives. The rationale for such an evaluation was twofold: officials in Wellington were concerned about the effect recognition could have on the security of South East Asia; just as they were concerned with the effect it could have on the relationship with Washington. If Peking were accorded greater international acceptance, this could have a corollary effect of encouraging Communist insurgency throughout South East Asia and undermine the confidence of those Asian nations presently committed to resisting Communism, in terms of their perceptions of the West's commitment to their non-Communist future.

In this situation it [was] contended that any change from this present policy of non-recognition of the Chinese

Communists would serve only to boost Chinese morale at home and bolster Chinese prestige abroad.²²

The strategic evaluation of Formosa's link with South East Asian security was linked to the fact that in the Second World War the Japanese had mounted an invasion of the Philippines and then Indonesia from Formosa²³. Thus New Zealand was worried about a great power controlling Formosa and how that control could impact on security in South East Asia. In this sense it was preferable to have the Nationalists controlling Formosa than the potentially hostile PRC. Another response to these threat perceptions was a greater commitment in this period to regional defence and security planning. This can be seen in the abandonment of the Middle East contingency at the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Meeting in 1955, and with Australia and New Zealand also agreeing to place more importance on South East Asia in their strategic planning. Thus the Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve was established as part of the so-called forward defence strategy to be employed in the region in line with the SEATO accord.²⁴

However, Macdonald's central aim during the Offshore Islands dispute was the same as Webb's, he was primarily concerned with averting an escalation of hostilities into which New Zealand could, conceivably, be drawn with regard to the ANZUS connection, but also in terms of another World War.²⁵ The approach to the crisis, under Macdonald, was determined by New Zealand's perceptions of its security requirements. These were based upon the perceived Communist Chinese threat to South East Asia, which led the Government to deny the provisions of the Cairo Declaration that maintained that Formosa was

²² File Note: The Problem of China, 13 September 1957, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 12.

²³ *NZPD*, 305 (1955), p. 57.

²⁴ The Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve had contingents from Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom and was used in the Malayan Emergency during the period between 1955 and 1960, which was essentially a conflict with Malayan Communist guerilla forces. However, its prime role was as a reserve to support SEATO and deter Chinese intervention in South East Asia, see McIntyre, *ANZUS Pact*, pp. 373-376, 'From Dual Dependency to Nuclear Free', p. 531.

²⁵ MinEA to NZHCLon, NA: PM 264/3/2/1 Part 5.

Chinese territory.²⁶ Concerns for Formosa were essentially strategic and had little to do with a specific attitude to the Nationalist regime. Indeed in denying that Formosa was Chinese territory the Government was implicitly rejecting the Nationalists' own claim to the island as the legitimate Government of China.

New Zealand was not totally convinced of the US perspective in the international management of the crisis. Wellington made it clear to the US that New Zealand considered UN action to defend the islands or to maintain Nationalist control in the region was not a legitimate function of the world body, as it would constitute interference in internal Chinese affairs. New Zealand had no desire in seeing the UN get involved in resolving the ongoing Chinese Civil War²⁷. New Zealand's use of the UN in attempting to settle her concerns over the crisis were in mediating the conflict somewhat peacefully, and in attempting to contain the dispute so it did not evolve into something larger and more dangerous for New Zealand security.

Holland, for his part, returned to a familiar pattern in an external affairs debate in March 1955²⁸. In it he said that those advocating recognition were deluding themselves, as New Zealand simply could not go out on a limb against the expressed policy of a great power, particularly when the great power was a close ally²⁹. While the Prime Minister did say that the time was approaching for a serious reconsideration of the policy, it was not, in mid-1955, right³⁰. Moreover, positive statements on recognition could be very damaging to New Zealand by upsetting the Americans. Holland still saw the US alliance as fragile,

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ *NZPD*, 305 (1955), p. 16; *Dominion*, 18 June 1955.

²⁹ Memorandum: NZ Prime Minister Statement in Parliament, 21 July 1955, NZAmWash to MinEA, 6 August 1955, 10th Regular Session, UN General Assembly, 25 August 1955, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 11.

³⁰ NZ Prime Minister Press Statement, 17 June 1955, DEA Note for Information of the NZ Prime Minister - Recognition of Communist China, 29 February 1956, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 11; *NZPD*, 300 (1955) p. 1062.

thus US sensitivities on the 'China questions' prevented any thoughts of positive movement on recognition and UN representation.

We should not seek the displeasure of our friends by doing something which would cause them great displeasure. In any case we have little to gain from recognition and we have something of value to gain by continuing our present attitude of non-recognition.

The balance of the advantage weighs heavily in favour of retaining the support and cooperation of the Americans by abstaining from action which would affect our relations with them.³¹

Duncan Rae, of all people, expressed this sentiment in August 1956 by declaring that it was "important and vital to the peace of the world that we should not unwittingly or perhaps brazenly, endanger the friendship of the United States of America".³² Holland believed that Western security rested upon the defensive shield provided by the US. Therefore, retaining US cooperation and support was the critical determinant in China policy.³³

A Departmental briefing paper in February 1956 also placed considerable emphasis on the American factor. This paper asked a number of pertinent questions as to what the main determinants of policy toward China should be. Among those questions was what attitude New Zealand should take to the Communist regime, what practical advantages could result from recognition, and what effect a positive approach to recognition could have on "countries friendly to us".³⁴ The paper then encapsulated these dictates by concluding that the "critical consideration"³⁵ in the formulation of China policy was maintaining

³¹ NZ Prime Minister Press Statement & DEA Note for NZ Prime Minister.

³² *NZPD*, 309 (1956), p. 943.

³³ *NZPD*, 309 (1956, p. 963 (Holland).

³⁴ DEA: Note for Information of the NZ Prime Minister - Recognition of Communist China, 29 February 1956, NA: PM 264/3/14/1 Part 11.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

American cooperation. It clearly maintained that a greater advantage lay in not offending the Americans than in recognising a Communist regime in China.

...the major effect [of recognition] would be on our relations with the United States with whom we are joined both in SEATO and ANZUS. The Americans are obviously anxious at the moment about the possibility of a general move towards recognition. The question is one of the greatest domestic significance for the United States Government... a very much longer period will be necessary before the United States will be prepared even to consider the possibility of recognition of Communist China. Any positive action on our part at this stage would be regarded by the United States as an unfriendly act.³⁶

CONCLUSIONS

The non-recognition policy was strongly maintained in the period between 1954 and 1957. While it was acknowledged that the negative approach to the recognition and UN admission questions could not continue indefinitely, the National Government, during the last stage of its tenure in office, was not prepared to change the policy at that time. This position was repeatedly asserted by the likes of Macdonald and Holland. In reality New Zealand's position was the same as it had been in earlier years. Essentially the official line maintained that Peking had to prove itself ready to abide by UN rules and to settle its disputes in a peaceful manner, in order for a change to occur.

There were a number of factors at work dictating not just the maintenance of non-recognition during this period, but a hardening of this negative position. Pre-eminent among these factors was the perception that there was nothing on offer in a favourable movement toward recognition that could justify the cost of offending the Americans, therefore, the need to retain US cooperation was the overriding factor in the formulation of foreign policy and, therefore, in China policy also. There was also a personality factor in that concern for the US perspective was held strongly by Holland and Macdonald, and there was no Webb to suggest an alternative approach. Finally, there was the continuing

³⁶ Ibid.

argument that appeasement only emboldened aggressors and disheartened those who might otherwise resist Communist expansion in South East Asia. In this sense Peking's behaviour was a determinant, as the PRC were again seen as an aggressor in an international dispute. Indeed, New Zealand's military strategy was now based around confronting what was perceived to be a Communist Chinese threat in South East Asia.

Conclusions

In the twelve years between 1945 and 1957 New Zealand's attitude toward China evolved from that of wartime ally into cold war adversary. The policy approach established during this period remained in place until 1972 when Norman Kirk's Labour Government ended the policy of postponement by recognising the Chinese Communist Government at Peking. The principal concern of this thesis has been to examine why the non-recognition policy was established and then maintained between 1945 and 1957.

A number of stages can be identified in the development of policy toward China during this era. The first of these is the period between 1945 and 1948. During the late 1940s the New Zealand-China relationship could be described as somewhat distant and cautious, with an inherent ambivalence in New Zealand's view of China. Despite Nationalist China's status as a wartime ally, there was a pervasive mistrust of Asian nations in general and the regard for Nationalist China as an ally was never in the same light as Britain, Australia, or the United States. It was also during this period that criticism of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist regime grew within New Zealand, in part due to the perception of China's treatment in the Cairo Declaration, in the assessment of China's role in the Pacific War, and in the perception that the regime was corrupt. Above all, with the rise of the Chinese Communists towards power, there was the crossing of the existing yellow peril with the red menace in a more insidious threat to New Zealand's security. New Zealand's closest allies were instrumental in shaping these threat perceptions.

However, the key period in the establishment of the non-recognition approach was late 1949-early 1950. Peter Fraser was the key figure in the establishment of this position. Certainly it was apparent in the early part of 1949 that the Labour Government had adopted a negative attitude to developments in China which indicated that the Communists would soon be in control. The negative attitude steadily built momentum throughout 1949 and culminated in

the argument made out at Canberra in November. The decision to postpone recognition was then cemented in by the National Government. This was despite some inclination to reconsider the question between 1951 and 1954, most publicly in the speeches of Clifton Webb. In the main the National Government remained true to this pattern for the remainder of its time in office, although it was repeatedly acknowledged that the time was approaching for a reconsideration, but was not then right.

Why a negative official attitude was translated into the non-recognition policy can be explained in terms of a number of major categories of influence. These include the lack of direct New Zealand interests in China; perceptions of a monolithic rather than divisible Communism; events like the Korean War and the Offshore Islands dispute; questions of approach like 'dialogue versus isolation' or 'appeasement versus standing up to aggression'; and the influences of allies and personalities. All had some influence on the establishment and maintenance of non-recognition and all can be utilised as explanations for what occurred in China policy between 1945 and 1957. The relative importance of each of these reasons tended to change over time.

The approach of indefinitely postponing a decision on recognition fitted with New Zealand's lack of direct interests in China, and this was a reason which maintained its importance throughout the era. Unlike Britain, New Zealand did not have a profitable trading relationship to protect with recognition. There was therefore no burning need to rush into a decision on recognition in 1949, or to follow Britain's lead in January 1950. Postponement was also a useful approach in regard to the question of Peking's admission to the UN, as the indefinite deferral of this question in the UN prevented a possible disruption to the international body and averted a potential Communist majority in the Security Council. The notion that Peking was part of a monolithic international Communist movement, aligned as a junior partner to the USSR, was a further factor pushing New Zealand in a negative direction on the recognition question. Evaluations of this type saw a Communist-controlled China as harbouring aggressive intentions, particularly in South

East Asia. This was a reason for following the British suggestion to shift strategic and defence planning emphasis from the Middle East to South East Asia in the mid-1950s. This reorientation also had an impact in the hardening attitude towards China in the later part of this era between 1955 and 1957. Thus China was seen as threat, not a candidate for recognition, especially in the light of the prevailing belief that aggressors should be confronted and not appeased. There were suggestions that Peking could be detached from Moscow if the West sought to enhance points of difference between the two Communist superpowers with recognition. Certainly Tito had demonstrated the possibility of a non-monolithic Communism. However, the prevailing view within official circles emphasised China's connection with an international Communist movement which posed a threat to New Zealand's security.

The perception of a monolithic and threatening international Communism was often exacerbated by events throughout this period. For example, one influential view of Chinese intervention in the Korean War was as part of the international Communist movement's desire for expansion. This impacted not only on the general attitude towards recognition but also on the stance taken in the UN to the question of Chinese representation. The effect of the Korean War on the maintenance of non-recognition should not be underestimated. Once it was under way, more particularly once American and New Zealand and other Commonwealth forces were involved, a move to recognise a nearby Communist power, which was helping and might well be behind North Korean aggression, was highly unlikely. Chinese intervention took recognition off the agenda in the meantime. Latterly, the perception of continued Chinese Communist aggressive expansion in the Offshore Islands dispute also mitigated against a favourable response to the UN question and to recognition generally.

The role of personality was the most significant factor in the establishment and maintenance of the non-recognition approach in 1949 and 1950. This factor was more important than concern for the American perspective at this time. Peter Fraser was in a powerful position to influence policy as Prime

Minister and Minister of External Affairs. Fraser's negative view towards recognition prevailed over the generally favourable view of his advisers because he had the power and his advisers could only advise. Essentially Fraser's approach mixed moral and practical considerations. Underpinning his view was his disapproval of the fact that the Communists had come to power by force. Beyond that he believed that Peking was inherently aggressive and expansive and could not be detached from the Soviets. A man of strong moral principles, he held particularly firmly to the line that it was both morally wrong and bad policy to appease aggression, as it heartened the aggressor and would damage the confidence of those attempting to resist Communist aggression in South East Asia. It was at the behest of Fraser that Alister McIntosh made New Zealand's extreme case against recognition at Canberra, the clearest articulation of the official attitude on the recognition question to that point. The influence of personality can also be seen in the case of Holland, who was not only mindful of the approach established under Fraser in maintaining the negative line, but also strongly influenced by concern for the American perspective and sensitivities before and after ANZUS was concluded. Holland, despite his evident pro-British sentiment, was very comfortable with the Americans and this was seen in his attitude to the recognition issue.

One who disagreed somewhat with the approaches of Holland and Fraser was Clifton Webb. His advocacy of a softer line and an approach including dialogue and conciliation was an attempt to air a policy alternative. Webb was unconvinced as to the merits of following the American line on China policy questions and his argument did place him most conspicuously on the other side to Fraser, Holland and Macdonald. However, that the negative approach was prevalent can be seen in the instances when Webb was forced to qualify any positive statements on recognition, in case New Zealand policy should be construed as departing from the established non-recognition position.

In the international political environment which characterised much of this era, New Zealand was a small fish in a large ocean, indisposed to taking the

initiative in foreign policy. Therefore, she would have to wait for a change in the policies of two of her closest allies, Australia and the US, before the non-recognition approach could be seriously reconsidered. Thus the China policies of Australia and particularly the United States, emerged as the vital determining element after the ANZUS Treaty was signed and the Korean War saw New Zealand troops in conflict with the Chinese. This would remain the case until at least the end of the National Government's term of office. Britain's influence on China policy in this era was ranked behind that of the United States and the Commonwealth allies Australia and Canada. Even after the conclusion of ANZUS, officials in Wellington were still insecure in their relationship with Washington, so it was felt there was still a need to align policy in line with the American approach. China policy in the later stages of the National Government acknowledged this fact as New Zealand's position hardened after the period of questioning the US approach during Webb's involvement with China policy.

Overall, this thesis confirms the stress on concern for the American perspective as a reason for non-recognition which pervades the commentaries of Shuker, McCraw, McGibbon, Kennaway, and others. The argument has been made that New Zealand was inclined to follow the US lead against recognition during this era, and this inclination was reinforced by the knowledge that Australia felt the same way. However, while accepting and confirming the US factor, this thesis has sought to modify this approach somewhat. Firstly, concern for the American view appears to have been comparatively unimportant during the initial establishment and maintenance of non-recognition during 1949 and 1950. Other factors are seen as more important in this formative period. These included the personality aspect, particularly Peter Fraser's moral/practical argument, which held that recognition could possibly weaken the resistance to an aggressive China in South East Asia. That concern was underpinned in turn by the perception that China was inherently aggressive and could not be separated from the Soviets, and by the belief that appeasement emboldened aggressors and disheartened those who might resist them. That the overwhelming reason for non-

recognition during 1949 and 1950 was the desire not to offend the Americans does not come through in primary source analysis, particularly in the official files. It could even be argued that without the American alliance, or the prospect of such an alliance, New Zealand could well have followed the same policy. The Canberra argument suggests this, as does the approach of National in 1950, particularly once the Korean War began. Secondly, it is argued here that the position espoused at Canberra was essentially Fraser's view and this aspect has not been emphasised enough in the historiography. Therefore Fraser's influence on the establishment of non-recognition has been critically understated.

Finally, this thesis contradicts Shuker's assertion that the Canberra meeting supported evidence that New Zealand favoured recognition in 1949. Shuker's analysis of New Zealand's position at Canberra has been hampered by a lack of documentary evidence. The argument made in Chapter Two of the thesis tends to cast some doubt on this view and on the suggestions of Reese, Albinski, and Burton that New Zealand wanted to recognise in 1949.¹

¹ Albinski & Burton op. cit.; T.R. Reese, *Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. A Survey of International Relations 1941-1968*, London: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 152.

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