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This book is dedicated to

James, Eleanor and Julia,

with gratitude for their assistance.
Introduction

This volume contains the diaries kept by William (Bill) Slater from World War 1, when he was a stretcher-bearer on the Western Front, and from the Second World War when he was Australia’s first Minister (Ambassador) to Russia. The originals are held in the Australian National Library (MS 2016). It seems Bill intended for his WW2 diaries to be published; he had a number of pages typed up in 1944, but found the expense and time involved put the project beyond him. Modern word processing and short-run printing have now made the task practical.

In order to make some of the personal references in the diaries clearer, we have included brief details of Bill’s life before, between and after the diaries were written. Other personal and historical references are given in the footnotes, and his slang terms (some now rarely heard) are given in the Glossary. Some names he only partly gave in the text; where we have been able to discover full names we have given them in the Index. We have also included some extracts from letters home to his wife during World War 2. When he gives a price in pounds, we have converted it to the equivalent in Australian Dollars in the year 2000.

We have made some minor changes to the text in order to make the entries more readable; we have spelt out abbreviations, added the occasional “I”, “a” and “the” and changed word order to make the meaning clearer. Where we have added words to clarify or explain a reference, we have included them in square brackets [ ]. In making these changes we have been careful not to alter the meaning of the original.

It should be noted that Bill’s handwriting was difficult to read at the best of times, let alone when he was under fire in the trenches or flying in a American bomber! Where we have been unsure of a name or word we have marked it [?]. We welcome suggested corrections - contact details for the publisher are given on the title page.

Transcribing and editing these diaries has been a lengthy task, but we hope that their publication will give some historical insight and help to keep alive the memory of a truly remarkable Australian.

Helen Slater (Bill’s daughter) and
David Widdowson (Bill’s Grandson)
Abbreviations

ADS- Advanced Dressing Station
AFL - American Federation of Labour
AIF- Australian Imperial Force
ALP - Australian Labor Party
AMC - Army Medical Corps
ANA - Australian Natives Association
ANZAC- Australia and New Zealand Army Corps
ASFL - Australia-Soviet Friendship League
CO - Commanding Officer
DRS - Divisional Rest Station
FA - Field Ambulance
GOC - General Officer Commanding
ILO - International Labor Organisation
MDS- Main Dressing Station
MHR- Member of the House of Representatives
MLA- Member of the Legislative Assembly (Victoria)
MLC- Member of the Legislative Council (Victoria)
MM- Military Medal
MO- Medical Orderly
OC - Officer Commanding
RAMC - Royal Army Medical Corps
RSA- Returned Soldiers’ Association (later the RSL)
USSR - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WO- Warrant Officer
YMCA- Young Men’s Christian Association
Glossary*

Where these terms first appear in the text they are marked*.

Aus, Ausy- Australian/ Australia
Backsheesh- something got for free
Blighty- England (got Blighties- went to England)
Blues - Hospital clothes
Dixie- mess tin, large iron pot for making stew, soup etc
Drive the quill - pen push, work in an office
Duck-board- wood placed in floor of trenches
Fritz- German soldier/ German army
Froggie- Frenchman
Furphy- rumour, gossip
Groper- (ie Sand Groper)- West Australian
Jingos- people in favour of complete victory in war
Lead swinging- malinger, make up excuse not to work
Lilliputian- short, tiny
Mater- mother
Napoo- doomed, done for
Parade - parade for- go before an officer, tribunal
Pierrot- musician, performer or entertainer
Rubber- one game or set in sport or game
Shick- drunk
Shivoo- party, celebration
Stunt- activity, battle, bombing
Swing the Banjo- to shovel dirt
Tommy- English Soldier
Warm- lots of shell fire, action
West, go West- to die
The Pre-War Years, 1890-1916.

Very little is known about the early life of Bill Slater in the last decade of the nineteenth century. He later gave his birth date as May 20th 1890, but no birth certificate has been found to confirm this. We do know that he attended Armadale Primary School in Melbourne until he was 12, when the death of his father forced Bill to get a job selling newspapers to help support his mother and two younger sisters. He was still keen to learn, however, and spent many evenings reading in the Prahran Municipal Library.

In his early teens he joined the Try Boys’ Society, a youth movement created to combat the larrikinism prominent on Melbourne streets at the time. Perhaps Bill was on the road to becoming a larrikin himself; he was brought before the Try Society “Court” for breaking the club rules on so many occasions that expulsion from the society was recommended. Only after he made a direct approach to the Society’s founder, William Mark Forster, was the expulsion order rescinded.

Bill would later recall one of his first jobs as a painter’s assistant. He was told to paint a trellis (a very tedious task) which he completed - and then promptly quit! Later the Try Society found him work as an office boy with a law firm and perhaps here began a fondness for the law which lasted throughout his life.

During this period he was developing a strong radical philosophy based on his observation of the many injustices existing in society. He spent his evenings at night classes run by the Try Boys’ Society and attended Socialist Party meetings. He joined the history classes that author and historian Bernard O’Dowd ran in the evenings, and became a member of the Clerk’s Union.

Throughout his childhood (and as an adult) he loved sport and excelled as a cricketer, footballer and swimmer; he won quite a few long-distance swimming events including a three-mile Yarra river swim. He would later reminisce about the day he rode his bicycle the 90 miles from Melbourne to Colac to take part in a swimming event - which he won - and then rode all the way home again!

In 1912, aged 22, he moved to Mildura to work as a solicitor’s clerk in the law firm of P.T. Park. Here he became friends with William Jeffries
Smith, an Englishman who was staying at the same boarding house. With Percy Robbins they pooled their resources to purchase a 2½-acre block, called “Angels’ Rest”, in order to grow dried fruits. Bill spent weekends ploughing and planting vines, while in the evenings he continued to study for his matriculation.

In Mildura he played with the local football team and came to be accepted as one of the “Mildura boys”. He also joined the local Australian Labor Party branch and was influenced by Labor stalwarts such as Peter McDonald and Father Jim Ryan. They urged him to stand as a candidate for the State Electorate of Mildura-Swan Hill.

In Europe at this time came developments that were to change Bill’s life. In August 1914, war had broken out between the massive armies of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (including Germany) and the allied forces including France, Britain and Russia. It was a war like none that had gone before; new technology such as the machine gun and barbed wire made defending a position much easier than attacking. The traditional means of attack - on foot and by horse - were made near impossible. The result, after a few months of fighting, was a general stalemate with both sides dug in to a labyrinth of trenches and any attacks resulting in the slaughter of hundreds of men. It was in order to avoid this stalemate that the allies attempted to create a new front in Turkey through the Dardanelles Straits. On April 25th 1915 troops landed on the beach at Anzac Cove on the Gallipoli Peninsula. In the following nine months, ten thousand Australian troops were killed, among them Bill’s friend William Smith. After the failure of this campaign the allies withdrew, but the fighting continued on the Western Front in France.

After previously being rejected on health grounds, Bill was accepted into the Australian Infantry Force at the end of 1915, at the age of 25. He entered camp at Royal Park, Melbourne in January 1916 and later trained at the Melbourne Showgrounds. He was strongly opposed to taking up arms against his fellow man, so he joined the 10th Field Ambulance as a stretcher-bearer. He left Australia on June 20th 1916 on the Runic, arriving in England on August 10th. He had a further period of training at Lark Hill Camp at Amesbury, and in November was sent to France. He had been in the trenches for a month when he started keeping a diary on the first of January 1917.
1. WORLD WAR I, 1917-18

10th Australian Field Ambulance.
3rd Division, Australian Infantry Force.

Monday 1st January 1917. We open the year in the dugout at Willow Walk\(^1\). A loud rumbling of guns awakens me on another year, 1917 - what will be the fruits of the year be? The unturned pages will see something, I guess. I get some Australian parcels and a plum pudding, which is very acceptable and opportune. We get a night carry\(^2\), which is an exceedingly arduous one.

Tuesday 2nd January. A fairly uneventful day. Shells (high explosive and shrapnel) burst very close to us. We have a hard carry at dusk of a man who was gradually “going west”\(^3\). Gruesome sight at mortuary at Tissage\(^4\) - about six fellows in pieces there; evidence of the hellishness of war.

Wednesday 3rd January. Peter Dredge (“Anzac”), Noel Bodington (“Bodie”), Perce Thomas and Wal Penny\(^5\) leave us at Willow Walk but we still stay on, being “old” heads. It is exactly twelve months since I entered camp at Royal Park. Plenty of straffing today and shell burst close to our dugout. A couple of parcels come to hand and are greatly appreciated. We still play bridge in the trenches.

Thursday 4th January. Sid Webb, O.V. Bannister, Roy Duckett and Clarrie Greenwood form the new party to join us but we have still to stay on. Have a couple of cases to take through. Poor old Bruce Sloss the great South Melbourne footballer is killed with a shell. I see his body at the mortuary at Tissage. Snipers were busy when we wended our way back to the trenches.

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\(^1\) Willow Walk (Ruelle de la Noix) was a subsidiary (or support) trench; that is a trench that ran perpendicular to the main trenches, allowing safe access from behind the lines.

\(^2\) A stretcher carry - this was Bill’s main job but he was given many others, as the following pages show.

\(^3\) See glossary on page 7 for items marked *.

\(^4\) Tissage (French for Weaving Mill) and Little Mary (Petit Marais) were Aid Posts - where wounded soldiers would first be taken for treatment. Later, the wounded would be moved to an Advanced Dressing Station, and finally to a Main Dressing Station.

\(^5\) Members of the 10th Field Ambulance as are most of the men mentioned in this diary.
Friday 5th January. A quiet uneventful day in the dugout. I stay in bed (?!?) all day as it’s too damn cold to stir out.

Saturday 6th January. We leave the trenches quite gladly and go back to the Advanced Dressing Station [ADS]. It’s a change to get away from a place where stray pieces of iron and lead are indiscriminately thrown about. On going up to the town [Armentières] I see Ern Pasque, Paddy Young, George Risbey, Gus Pegler and Fred Ethel. Go to the YMCA 6 at night.

Sunday 7th January. I’m at the Advanced Dressing Station. We form a party engaged in filling sandbags to place against the walls in case of shell attacks.

Monday 8th January. Still on the sandbag filling stunt* and it’s not a bad one either. I’m beginning to think that there is hardly a job that I haven’t done since I’ve been in the army. Went up to the Main Dressing Station [MDS] to get a hot bath and change of clothes. Great surprise in seeing Tom Kaiglin there.

Tuesday 9th January. More sandbag filling and generally useful work. There is a big raid by one of the battalions (37th) and some casualties are expected. Fortunately not many cases came through.

Wednesday 10th January. At advanced dressing station. More sandbag filling. Went up to Armentières in the evening and saw the pierrot* show 7 at the YMCA. On returning to the ADS have to go down to Tissage aid post as some cases are expected. Returned shortly as nothing was doing. Wakened up at 12 o’clock and Vic and I had to go to Willow Walk as reserves. Stayed out there all night.

Thursday 11th January. Returned to the ADS with stretcher case from Willow Walk. Nothing much doing for rest of day.

Each member of the section has to pay one Franc for certain trees that were cut down at the Advanced Dressing Station. What in the hell are we fighting for - Liberty of the subject or Capitalist possession?

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6 The Young Men’s Christian Association played a large part in the War effort, supplying accommodation and activities for soldiers.

7 Pierrot shows were soldiers’ revues - variety shows featuring music, songs, dances, topical items, etc. (Pierrot is French for clown).
Friday 12th January. We leave the ADS and return to the Main Dressing Station at Armentières. I am immediately detailed for evening duty in the surgical ward. A few patients only to look after so we have a quiet night. It’s a great change to be back and away from the noise of gun and bursting shell. Peter “Dangles” Dangerfield and I take damn good care that we get some sleep even though we are on duty.8

Saturday 13th January. Sleep in during the morning because of being on duty during the night. Sid Vickery (“Vic”), Len Shaw, Frank Shaw, Tom Walsh and I hire a room from a neighbouring householder. Here we play bridge, write etc. Our afternoon game of bridge is disturbed by Sgt Holgate detailing 12 of us as a reserve party to go down to the trenches. Back we go to Little Mary [Aid Post]. Vic, Tom Walsh, Alf Johnston and I go up to the trenches when the barrage is at its height. Strange meeting with George Risbey and Fred Ethel in the machine gunner’s dugout.

Sunday 14th January. We return from our strenuous evening’s work early in the morning, so have no duty in the daytime. It’s a home at the Main Dressing Station although the tucker is not of the best.

Monday 15th January. In our room a couple of doors away from the MDS. Here we find comfort and warmth and play bridge and read and write to our hearts’ content. Frugal suppers are enjoyed and altogether it’s a “home” when compared with our billets [at ADS]. I strike guard duty and am on from 12 to 3 for the two shifts.9

Tuesday 16th January. Still on guard duty. I spend a few spare hours in our room reading and writing.

Wednesday 17th January. More guard duties but quiet, uneventful day.

Thursday 18th January. Fatigue duties again and Vic and I strike stretcher squad. Rotten job as we are on from 9am until 9pm. Very cold too to be standing there on duty.

Friday 19th January. Fatigue duties again (latrines). Not a bad job so we must have got it by influence.

Saturday 20th January. Cook’s fatigue today. Plenty of scrubbing of greasy dixies*. Reminds me of the show grounds. Plenty cold and the

8 While this is obviously a joke, it is apparent that life in the Field Ambulance was a bit less regimented than that of a normal soldier.

9 That is, from 12 to 3am and 12 to 3pm; a standard practice.
ground is frozen hard.

**Sunday 21st January.** Sandbag filling stunt today but we don’t over exert ourselves as Vic and I are good Sabbatarians. Strike guard duties and go on at 3am until 6am.

**Monday 22nd January.** Guard duties 3pm until 6pm. Spare time spent in a few games of bridge at our little “home”.

**Tuesday 23rd January.** Weather very cold although fine and sunny. Still on guard duty at the MDS. Vic and I go for a walk to the Soldiers’ Cemetery. We find it very well kept and the graves neatly laid out. Snow covered, they present an even more peaceful and beautiful appearance than usually. I find Billy Urquhart and Alf Park’s graves (two Mildura boys) sleeping their last sleep in this fine French cemetery.

**Wednesday 24th January.** Vic and I strike stretcher squad and we have another freezing day - still the time passes quickly and we warm ourselves by the bathroom fire and we argue out our various political views and Mr Wilson’s speech to the American senate.¹⁰

**Thursday 25th January.** Cooks’ fatigue today and plenty of ice covering everything. They say it’s averaging 10 to 13 degrees of frost¹¹ and I know that when water is thrown on to the ground it freezes immediately. Pay day yesterday so we all go for a feed to one of the many “egg and chip” joints.

**Friday 26th January.** What have Vic and I done to miss getting a duty? Still we take advantage of the holiday. Today is Australia’s Foundation Day so we attend a celebration at the YMCA where several padres give addresses. We go to the pierrot show in the night. The weather is still fearfully cold and a little Aus warmth would be appreciated by all.

**Saturday 27th January.** On stretcher squad 9am till 3pm. Vic and I get plenty of work. Just as we finish our shift we get a surprise for (with Len and Frank) we have to go to a stunt at the Divisional Baths at Erquinghem. Go there by car but find it not too bad. Senior Sergeant Stahle is in charge and we settle down for a good time. Do a little sliding on the ice, for the frost still continues and it freezes the ground. More bridge at night.

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¹⁰ President Woodrow Wilson’s January 22 *Peace without Victory* speech to the US congress.
¹¹ Degrees below freezing point, ie below 32° F.
**Sunday 28th January.** We do a bit of work in sorting out socks, etc at the Divisional Baths. It is a vast cotton-weaving works converted to the use of the soldier for his ablutions and change of clothes. I believe we pay 80 francs per day as rent for the use of the factory. More ice sliding indulged in and it’s great. We see early in the evening the raid by our boys on the enemy trenches. The barrage is loud and fearful and we think ourselves lucky to be away.

**Monday 29th January.** Still at Erquinghem. Do a little work in the drying room. Great and pleasant surprise to see Stan Shilliday, Gus Pegler and Fred Ethel. They are billeted right next to us. I look forward to having some good times with them but am disappointed as we are relieved at 3.30 and have to go back to the MDS. We have a great tea at our little “home” as Vic and I receive parcels. What a change it is to get good wholesome Australian food.

**Tuesday 30th January.** Back again at Main Dressing Station and C Section is on hospital duty. I get my old job in the Reception room. Griff Evans and I are on together and work six-hour shifts so that we don’t fare too badly. Slight fall of snow breaks the frost that has been prevailing.

**Wednesday 31st January.** Plenty of work to do at the dressing station. Griff Evans and I are working together from 9 till 3 and 3 till 9.

**Thursday 1st February.** Uneventful day. Cold - bitterly cold weather continues.

**Friday 2nd February.** Still cold and frosty although each day is dry and there is a little sunshine to brighten things. We still play bridge of an evening at our private “billet”.

**Saturday 3rd February.** I continue on duty at the reception room at MDS. Frank Shaw comes on with me. Our little syndicate receives seven parcels between us and we have a great time in our home during spare moments.

**Sunday 4th February.** Frost continues - plenty of snow and ice all about us. I spend an enjoyable half-hour on the ice trying to learn to skate.

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12 The 10th Field Ambulance was divided into three sections: A, B and C. Bill was in C section.
**Monday 5th February.** I’m on duty at 3pm so take the advantage of having a sleep until noon even at the sacrifice of losing my breakfast - but what a loss! We have truly Baconian breakfasts - plenty of bacon and philosophy.\(^{13}\)

**Tuesday 6th February.** Glorious sunny day though frosty and Sgt Holgate, Stan Sievewright and I go for a long walk down to Laventie, which is some 14 km away. We pass Fleurbaix, which evidenced severe fighting some time back. It was here that the Australians sustained heavy losses in their early days in France. Lunched at Laventie - dodged the MPs. I was interested in Laventie because of an exquisite poem written about it by Tennant\(^{14}\), a nephew of Asquith, the ex-Prime Minister of Britain.

**Wednesday 7th February.** Cold, frosty weather continues and I still am on duty in the reception ward.

**Thursday 8th February.** Went for a walk down to the 37th Quartermaster’s and saw Peb Howitt. Had a great talk over old times.

**Friday 9th February.** Lot of Australian papers to hand and plenty of reading matter now for us. The Christmas annuals with their fine art pictures of Australia make us rather envious.

**Saturday 10th February.** Paid visit to the dentist as I had a couple of teeth requiring filling.

**Sunday 11th February.** The cold weather gives signs of discontinuing so what-oh for the thaw. Guess we’ll have seas of mud shortly.

**Monday 12th February.** Some of our section moves on to the advanced aid posts but I stay on an extra day at the MDS. Payday and we receive our new pay books. Another visit to the dentist for a couple of fillings.

**Tuesday 13th February.** The rest of the section moves down to the advanced dressing station. We have an easy day so fill in the time by going for a walk and then returning and playing bridge. Fritz* comes over at Willow Walk during the night and our artillery opens out. The ADS shakes a treat as guns close by pump lead into the enemy.

**Wednesday 14th February.** On reserve duty which spells loaf-o at the ADS. We clean up the grounds then spend the rest of the day reading and writing and in the evening we have a meeting to discuss the

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\(^{13}\) Baconian Breakfasts; pun on the name of philosopher Francis Bacon.

\(^{14}\) E. Wyndham Tennant’s *Home Thoughts from Laventie*; See Appendix 1.
question of forming a fund for C section to provide hospital comforts for any of us who may happen unfortunately to be wounded during the Big Push. Major Williams cheerfully expresses the opinion that most of us will get over to Blighty perhaps.

**Thursday 15th February.** Vic and I are appointed mess orderlies and spend the morning in cleaning up the dining room at the ADS. It is a fine sunny day and plenty of aircraft (our own and hostile) are in the air.

**Friday 16th February.** After dinner we move on to the advanced aid post in Tissage. Frank, Len, Vic and I are still together. Frank and I get a case shortly after arrival and shells come over us pretty freely. These roads we traverse are getting more dangerous every day.

**Saturday 17th February.** I have a very bad night’s sleep and fancy I got a touch of gas from one of the gas shells Fritz sent over. Frank and I get a carrying case but the poor fellow was dead before we went 200 yards.

**Sunday 18th February.** We have a fairly busy day at Tissage aid post and another man we take out passes away at the ADS.

**Monday 19th February.** Still down at Tissage aid post. They expect a stunt at night so reinforcements come down. They stay until 1.30am and then just after they leave we get a couple of cases. We get very little sleep that night although we only had a few cases.

**Tuesday 20th February.** We are relieved from Tissage aid post and return to the ADS where things are much quieter. It is a home here alright and after doing a few fatigue duties we have practically nothing to do all day. What a change it is to sleep right through the night without any fear of being wakened up to take a case on, and to sleep on soft beds upon which happy war-free French people slept a few years ago.

**Wednesday 21st February.** Vic and I are mess orderlies and we have to get the meals and wait on the 20 odd fellows who are with us at the ADS. We are getting very good meals here and in fact hardly know that there is a war on, although the trenches are barely a mile and a half away. Still we'll know what war really is in a few days as there is somethin’ doin’ and timber wagon after timber wagon doesn’t come up this way after dark with loads of cabbages or blue metal!

**Thursday 22nd February.** I am on wood fatigue today. It isn’t a hard job for we have found a Communale Ecole de Filles (magnificent type of modern buildings) fearfully destroyed by Fritz’s shells and the floors are in pieces so they give us all the wood we want. After finishing our
job, Vic and I go up to Armentières to the MDS where we draw our pay and adjourn to our billet.

**Friday 23rd February.** They are still preparing for the Big Stunt that is shortly coming off. A lot of my Mildura pals in the 38th [Battalion] are in it, so I’m anxious about it. We too have a hard and dangerous part to play, I daresay. We are still stationed at the ADS.

**Saturday 24th February.** We are due to go out to the aid post at Willow Walk trenches but on the CO’s orders no changes are to be made so we still remain at the good home (ADS). There’s a stunt down at Tissies\(^{15}\) in the night. It’s another raid and we are sent down as a reserve party but have little to do as the regimental bearers carry out their duties excellently.

**Sunday 25th February.** Escape duties on account of being up nearly all night, so just fill in the time by reading a few *Echos* and *Workers\(^{16}\)*.

**Monday 26th February.** It is a fine sunny day and at last we go on to the trenches. Several shells have landed right next to our dugout so we are obliged to sleep in a bigger safer one.

What an eternity we have passed through since I wrote the earlier part of today’s entry. At about a quarter to 9pm we have to take out a stretcher case and Len, Frank, Vic and I are on it. We get to Tissies at about 9.30 and then return post haste but it is too late and we reach the subsidiary line when Fritz starts shelling it and the gates of hell open wide. Will they get us? We wonder as we hurry along whether we’ll be engulfed. My God the awfulness of it all I’ll never forget. When we got to Willow Walk shells were bursting all round us and we could hardly see for the smoke of the explosions. In sheer exhaustion and collapse we reach the AMC dugout. Here we stay in safety until the barrage ceases and that strange quiet that follows a storm reigns. We then adjourn to the new hospital dugout where we see our other four pals who are astounded to hear of our getting back through the barrage. We then wait until the real thing comes. It is timed to start at 12.30am and is to last a couple of hours.

**Tuesday 27th February.** This most fateful of days dawns with us waiting for the barrage that is to precede the big raid. It starts and again hell is let loose. Fritz starts on our subsidiary line. Shells burst with

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\(^{15}\) Tissage Aid Post.

\(^{16}\) The *Ballarat Echo* and the *Worker* were socialist newspapers of the time.
terrible frequency and force all around us. However we feel safe. It is one o’clock and with a fearful thud a shell (boegh [?] explosive) catches the corner of the dugout and deals out death - my God I see it all and the scar is one that will remain imprinted in my brain. Poor old Len and Vic have gone West and they went out in the thousandth part of a second.

There are subdued whispers and I feel myself all over to see if I am hurting. I am dazed and deaf but the groans of some of the boys under the debris awakens me and I learn that we have all escaped Death’s call, although a sniper and Jack Stevens are brought out from under the bodies and debris. What a hell then do we face as, in the open and broken dugout, we huddle together to wait until the barrage is over. We have more than an hour to wait and every moment we expect another shell or shrapnel or a whizz-bang to send us all to eternity and join our mates. I’d die rather than spend another hour such as this. It is too awful, too nerve-wracking to describe. I want to forget it all but I never will be able to.

At last it is over and we crawl out to the AMC dugout and there remain until about 4 o’clock when all are sent back to the ADS. We go to bed but it is impossible to sleep so later in the day Frank and I go for a walk up to the ADS. I see Stan Shilliday at the ADS and we delightedly greet each other. He and all the Mildura boys get through the raid safely.

**Wednesday 28th February.** At last we are relieved, the 11th Field Ambulance taking over. It is a tragic going away with two of one’s best pals killed as mine were, but it’s another of war’s bitter, bitter experiences. Most of the section go up to the MDS, Frank and I being among the party. At 4 o’clock we go with about 100 of the boys under Major Williams to that beautiful little Armentières Soldiers’ Cemetery and there we see poor old Len and Vic being laid to rest. My God these are the times when one’s soul rebels against war and everything for which it stands. Frank and I are fearfully upset but sleep at our little billet.

**Thursday 1st March.** We move off at about 10 o’clock on our way to the Divisional Rest Station (DRS) at Steenwerck which we are taking over. We are lucky in being taken down in wagons. Our new home consists of a barn, tents, etc and is cold and cheerless. Frank and I go for a walk to the town of Steenwerck. It is typical of most of the Northern France towns.

**Friday 2nd March.** We are supposed to get up at 6.30 but it doesn’t come off. It is quite refreshing to hear a bugle call again. Frank and I
are put on duty as mess orderlies.

**Saturday 3rd March.** How one sleeps when even a little distance away from the line. Frank and I slept well and were again on our jobs as mess orderlies. Great sight seeing one of our captive balloons attacked by an enemy plane. The aeronauts escape by throwing themselves out in their parachutes.\(^{17}\)

**Sunday 4th March.** It is a fine day so I get a ride on one of the cars down to where the rest of the section are at Erquingham. They have a home there alright and I envy them. It is pretty rotten that the fellows in the section who best deserve a rest are separated and put down where we are. Tommy Walsh and Geoff Hemphill have an experience alright.

**Monday 5th March.** It is snowing again and we are having plenty of cold weather. Guess it is about time that it ceased. Out in these open places the cold is intense. Our newspapers have come at last.

**Tuesday 6th March.** We go for a walk to the 2nd Casualty Clearing Station and are shown round. Weather is still bitterly cold.

**Wednesday 7th March.** Bitterly cold weather continues. Things are very quiet over here and it is a welcome change from the trenches.

**Thursday 8th March.** Still quiet and restful at the DRS. Frank and I are on our jobs looking after the mess room.

**Friday 9th March.** Went down to the divisional baths at Steenwerck and saw several pals on the road notably Enoch Brockhouse, Cyril Keil and Ernie Opie.

**Saturday 10th March.** Great sight today when an enemy plane successfully attacked one of our captive balloons setting it on fire and causing the observers to throw themselves out on their parachutes.

\(^{17}\) Manned hot air and gas filled balloons were used for observation and photography of enemy positions. They would be winched to the required altitude. Crew wore parachutes in the event of attack.
**Sunday 11\(^{th}\) March.** The Dardanelles report is a staggering one\(^{18}\). Talk about political ineptitude and blunders. And Australia’s flower of manhood was sacrificed there. This spirit of militarism is a damnable one. When will democracy come into its own and commence to control its destinies?

**Monday 12\(^{th}\) March.** Uneventful day at the DRS. Frank and I are still on duty in the mess room.

**Tuesday 13\(^{th}\) March.** Volunteers are called for to go out on a stunt. C Section respond almost to a man. I go although the Warrant Officer didn’t want me to. We move off up to Armentières again and report at the MDS. Later on in the evening we march (ten of us) down to an advanced dressing station situated in a brick kiln. I meet Alf McKay here. We stay there as reserves but have nothing to do. The barrage is a long and loud one but the raid I understand was not too successful.

**Wednesday 14\(^{th}\) March.** We returned to the DRS fairly tired as we had but little sleep during the previous night. I spend the rest of the day in bed.

**Thursday 15\(^{th}\) March.** Another quiet day with the weather losing a little of its sting. How eagerly the neighbouring French folk are getting in their crops for war is making these stricken countries feel the pinch of shortage in wheat. That is where the advantages of our own great land come in. May she ever respect a truly Monroe doctrine\(^{19}\).

**Friday 16\(^{th}\) March.** We have our first game of [Australian Rules] football and play the 2\(^{nd}\) Casualty Clearing. The ground is soft and conditions heavy and we suffer defeat by a few goals.

**Saturday 17\(^{th}\) March.** Twenty of the C Section boys, self included, move off to Ploegsteert much to our annoyance as it is getting up nearer to the line. So we pack up our kits and our troubles\(^{20}\) and move off at 9 o’clock in the morning. Our new home isn’t too bad. There are a few small huts and our mission I believe is to help in the erection of a main dressing station. Looks as if somethin’ might be doin’ up this way shortly.

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\(^{18}\) Report of the inquiry into the events at Gallipoli in 1915.

\(^{19}\) Named after US President James Monroe, this was a principle of foreign policy opposing interference from outside powers.

\(^{20}\) Reference to line of song “Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile”.
Sunday 18th March. Quite a fine day - a typical Australian Sunday. We have very few duties to do so read and go for a walk along the pine tree lined roads. It was so enjoyable that it made us think the war was quite a long way off, but no - for only two miles away was the line.

Monday 19th March. It looks as if we’ll be here at Ploegsteert for a little while - that is if we have to help in the erection of the new dressing station. Today we fill in time by getting the ground ready. Matt Ferguson is head of the cuisine and it is excellent. Altogether we’re much better off and more comfortable than we expected to be. The Russian business is strange, but what can we expect from these intertwined monarchies of Europe?

Tuesday 20th March. We’re helping to make a roadway despite the icy wind and rain, but plenty of shovel work sends the red warm blood of youth coursing through our veins. Have to do a two hour shift on guard during the night. What a sight it is to look at the contour of the line silhouetted against the black heavens by the innumerable fairy lights and star shells constantly sent forth.

Wednesday 21st March. Still on the shovel work despite the intermittent falls of rain and sleet and snow. In the evening five of us go to the New Zealand [soldiers] pierrot show. It was excellent and how one’s spirits rose when one heard some first class orchestral music. I haven’t spent a happier evening since I’ve come to France.

Thursday 22nd March. Weather’s very cold and heavy falls of snow take place during the day. I thought we’d seen the worst and last of the winter but it doesn’t seem like it. Round a brazier in our little hut Sgt Holgate and I argue in the evening over the ethical aspects of war. How ardent my anti-militaristic views are. Militarism is the very antithesis of freedom.

Friday 23rd March. I’m still a knight of the shovel but the job is petering out. I’d prefer to be shovelling some Australian terra firma. In the night we strike guard and it’s damn cold patrolling at the bewitching hour.

Saturday 24th March. The Major orders a “closed camp” because of someone allegedly throwing some bullets in the kitchen fire with the

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21 Refers to the “February” revolution in Russia from 8 to 15 March, followed by the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II.
22 Play on the term “knight of the road”, British slang for tramp.
result that Corporal Dick was injured. We’re unlucky for we were to have gone to the pierrots with Alec Kelso. After tea being “confined to camp” we have a good hour’s football. Bodie and I have some great sport.

**Sunday 25th March.** We lost an hour’s sleep last night on account of the daylight saving scheme\(^{23}\). You lose a lot in the army, especially sleep! Frank and I get leave to go up to Armentières. We have dinner at Madame Blocquet’s and a right good homely meal it is. After dinner we all went to the cemetery to see Len and Vic’s graves. What a strange coincidence to find Len’s grave parallel with Billy Urquhart’s. On the way home we popped in to hear the orchestra of the New Zealanders.

**Monday 26th March.** Bodie, Peter Dredge, Dangles and I volunteer to go out to help build a hut for a Tommy* officers’ mess. And we’re told it’s a war! We get on very well with the Tommies but how wretchedly they fare regarding food. For lunch they got one biscuit and a fragment of cheese with tea. Hurrah for war!! It’s a good time for the profiteers but a damn poor one for Tommy and Bill.

**Tuesday 27th March.** “Gusty March”\(^{24}\) weather prevails and it’s not too pleasant to be working out of doors these days. Still we have to finish our dressing station on light work days so all of us are, in conjunction with the English engineers, working on it. At night Bodie, Dangles, Jack Hemphill and I go down to Houplines to get bricks. It was a fine clear night and although we were within three-quarters of a mile of the trenches we found things unusually quiet.

**Wednesday 28th March.** As we got back early in the morning from Houplines we didn’t go on to our job until after dinner. We “swing the banjo”* again.

**Thursday 29th March.** It’s a wet miserable day and a lot of us are detailed to go up with motor lorries and load them with the parts of the huts we are engaged in erecting. It is hard, strenuous work and we’re all satisfied that we earnt our “six bob” [now $20] and a good night’s repose. The indications of the terrible fierceness of the pending struggle grow apace.

**Friday 30th March.** Still engaged on the loading and unloading of the

\(^{23}\) Daylight Saving was first adopted in England in May 1916 (earlier in Germany), so Bill would have been unaccustomed to it.

\(^{24}\) “Gusty March” is a phrase from Tennant’s poem, see Appendix 1.
lorries and very hard work it is. At night we strike guard duty again. In anticipation of activity we all have to be on the alert for gas attacks and our respirators we have always to carry with us.

**Saturday 31st March.** We have some interesting fellows with us on this job including a party of Tommies from the 15th Field Ambulance. What experiences they have had in their 19 months “somewhere in France”. I hear about the Somme and its being a vast shambles and I hear many more interesting things besides, but I'll have to store them in my mind.

**Sunday 1st April.** An Australian mail is closing so I have to feverishly write when I get the chance. We are kept to our job pretty constantly for it has to be finished within a certain time according to the edict of the “heads”.

**Monday 2nd April.** More rain and gusty weather but we “carry on” as usual. We become excited for there are rumours of an Australian mail being in. It materialises and we get a great lot of letters. I get 24 and how delighted I am. We go down to hear the NZ pierrots again in the evening and they are up to their most excellent standard. To hear music makes you feel glad to be alive.

**Tuesday 3rd April.** Wake up to find a fierce blizzard raging with snow several inches thick on the ground. Weather conditions make it impossible to work outdoors so we put in the morning lining the new huts. Parcels from the Australian Comforts fund (all from South Australia) are received. They are very good. My donor is a Port Pirie woman who has two boys in *La Grande Guerre*.

**Wednesday 4th April.** Weather still cold and unpleasant and we have to keep hard at our job. Plenty of mud and slush to wade through but the boys in the line must be faring worse so I cannot complain. We go again at night to the NZ pierrot show for it (and the orchestra) are most excellent. Major Kenny comes down to pay us so some of the boys get a bit merry and bright.

**Thursday 5th April.** Another miserable sort of day and like the barber we go on working all day. In the night six of us go again to the New Zealand pierrot show. How we appreciate this music. It is excellent and takes us right away from the war.

**Friday 6th April.** The queerest Good Friday that I have ever spent. We

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25 French for the Great War.
26 Probably refers to the amount of work done by barbers in the Army.
work on our job until 3 o’clock when a few go to the Divy baths. After a good bath we have tea at the butcher’s shop at Steenwerck. We called at the DRS on our way back and I met George Sadleir and in his private room had a few games of bridge, some political arguments and a good supper.

**Saturday 7th April.** Peter “Anzac” Dredge and I get a job digging a drain. Would that it were an irrigation channel in Mildura. The weather brightens up and considerable aerial activity is seen. We see our first air duel. It was thrilling but one of our machines came down in flames. The horror of it all. The bravery of our airmen is superb.

**Sunday 8th April.** I get a half-day off so go up to Armentières to make final arrangements about the headstones on the boys’ graves. The Cité Bonjean cemetery looks at its best. It is really one of the finest Soldiers’ God’s-acre in France. Fritz sends plenty of shells into the East of the town. I went to the YMCA in the evening to hear the Easter Sunday service. Later on in the evening I go with some of the others down to Houplines for bricks. I saw the Mildura boys. Three of the 9th Field Ambulance are killed by a shell.

**Monday 9th April.** Sleep in during the morning because of our working on the brick stunt last night. In the afternoon I go to Armentières again with Frank Shaw. We finally arrange about the graves. I also see Madame Bloquet and get her to purchase a fine scarf for me. On our return we try to get a seat at the NZ pierrots but are too late.

**Tuesday 10th April.** We are engaged in putting on the finishing touches to our job. In a few weeks boys with shattered limbs and wracked nerves will be treated in this dressing station. More rain and snow today. We hear news of a brilliant advance down at Arras. Is it the beginning of the end? I wonder!

**Wednesday 11th April.** Another wretched day and more shovel work. It isn’t bad anyhow and we are all feeling fit, well and happy. The preparations for the advance are to be seen on every hand and everything points to the immanence of it on this part of the line. I go and hear the NZ pierrots in the evening and make my way to the show through a heavy snowstorm.

**Thursday 12th April.** Will the great Spring offensive so brilliantly commenced at Arras end this fearful carnage? How fervently I hope it

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27 Arras - 50 km south of Armentières. British offensive from 9/4 to 17/5/17.
will and how earnest is my desire to see the democracies of the world putting an end to remorseless struggles such as this.

**Friday 13th April.** Mail closing day and I had a job to get my letters written in time. We are easing off a bit now with our work. All the heads seem to be satisfied. How many wounded boys will appreciate the comfort and attention of this dressing station? God only knows.

**Saturday 14th April.** As we have almost finished the job (I am mapping bricks on the roadway we formed) we are given a half holiday which we make use of in resting. Bodie and I go down to Houplines for furniture in the evening and Fritz sent a few shells across not far from where we were.

**Sunday 15th April.** A real day of rest and the Major is surprised to see a few of us having breakfast in bed. This is a concession made to us by our pals because of our being out for bricks last night. It is a wet miserable day outdoors so we stay in the hut reading and writing, interspersed with a few games of Five Hundred.

**Monday 16th April.** We’ve only a few odd tasks to do at our new dressing station so are having a good time as a result of our energetic work. I get a chance of doing some reading and an old 19th century magazine has some articles of interest. We go again to the NZ pierrots in the night and the show was brilliant.

**Tuesday 17th April.** Most of the section are sent back to L’Estrade, but a few of us remain custodians of the dressing station as it were. In the evening we go down to Houplines for bricks. Jack Hemphill creates much fun by “arresting” a clock. We don’t get home until 4 in the morning.

**Wednesday 18th April.** I spend a glorious day in bed and actually have breakfast and dinner brought to me. It is raining again and I’m inclined to think that the terrific commanding is responsible for so much bad weather. Spend the evening reading, writing and card playing.

**Thursday 19th April.** Very little work to do but we spend the morning on some “duck-boarding”*. In the afternoon Frank Shaw, Sgt Holgate and I go in to Armentières to see if the graves are finished. We refuse to take delivery of the job for the Froggie* has not done it according to agreement. I am on guard in the evening from 9 till 12.

**Friday 20th April.** Another day of taking things easy. Do some more reading. In the evening Bodie and I and some of the boys from the Casualty Clearing Station go again to the NZ pierrots. It was great and a
great swing accompanied the items.

**Saturday 21st April.** Pack up for we’re off back to L’Estrade, the 9th Field Ambulance having taken over our new dressing station. We march back leisurely as a few of us are playing football against the Casualty Clearing Station. We have a good game but the casualty boys are too heavy for us and beat us by five goals. Saw Bob Fryer and Billy Tutor in the DRS. Had long chats to them both.

**Sunday 22nd April.** Have a day of rest for which many thanks as I feel sore after yesterday’s football. Frank Shaw and I go in to Steenwerck in the afternoon and have our photos taken. Australian mail comes in. Sure it is a day of delights. The Warrant Officer snares me for another night trip to Houplines for bricks. We’re down there when Fritz comes over and a heavy bombardment makes us return to home and safety.

**Monday 23rd April.** I sleep in all the morning because of our night stunt. Have a fairly easy time for the rest of the day. Keen political arguments are waged for we are on the eve of a Federal election. I’m emphatically opposed to the so-called National Government and am supporting the opposition. There is a genuine touch of spring in the air and the trees and hedges are just about to burst into leaf.

**Tuesday 24th April.** Another easy day. It is quite novel to have a full parade at 9am. Colonel Purdy is quite genial and jovial of late. Frank and I repair to our little private room where we have a good chance to read and write.

**Wednesday 25th April.** Still taking things easy and am not worrying. Bob Fryer and I have good chats over old times. George Sadleir and I have keen arguments over political topics, for election day is nearing.

**Thursday 26th April.** Weather good and on every hand most active preparations for the big offensive on Messines can be seen. The unit is still at the rest station and we are having a rather easy time. There is no use disguising the fact that days of hard and desperate fighting are ahead and for what purpose??

**Friday 27th April.** In these days of rather quietness I find pleasure in reading the *Workers* and *Ballarat Echos* sent to me. The Worker’s views coincide with mine and how different they are from the views of the jingoistic war-mongering press. I still have many arguments as to

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28 Such a government would have been formed by a coalition of all parties.
the real causes of this war on which I am keeping an open mind.

**Saturday 28th April.** Weather still fine and improving. We play football against the DSC [Divisional Supply Column] and secure an easy win by 12 goals 21 to 7.10. But it was not the same team that defeated us twice at the [Melbourne] Showgrounds.

**Sunday 29th April.** A momentous day for we are all given the vote. How eagerly I urge among my pals the cause of the opposition. Surely they can see how Hughes and his crew are trying to delude them. There are days of difficulty ahead if the soldiers are blind to their own interests. I think the majority of our unit has voted against Labor, much to my regret.

**Monday 30th April.** Another fine Spring day and I successfully dodge getting a job. In the afternoon Frank and I go up to Armentières in a car and set the border and headstones to Len’s and Vic’s graves. Sgt Holgate accompanies us. On the way back we stop at Nieppe and hear the pierrot show. Fritz very nearly got the bridge at Pont de Nieppe.

**Tuesday 1st May.** It is a beautiful day - quite a typical May day so I don’t begrudge getting a job which is to accompany some wagons to the Pont de Nieppe baths. Frank and I go and quite revel in the trip. We see where Fritz got a few shells on to and about the important bridge crossing the Lys and connecting Nieppe with Armentières.

**Wednesday 2nd May.** Another quiet easy day spent in divers manners. Playing cards, reading and general discussion - but no work. Afar the rumble of guns continues and shortly that rumble will be near - very near. There is no doubt but that the world is sick to death of this fratricidal struggle whose future and end are still wrapped in uncertainty.

**Thursday 3rd May.** We hand in our winter equipment (leather jackets, etc) and the colonel makes an inspection and finds many of us unshaved. Terrible offence, you know, although we are on active service. We lose George Sadleir who has got a good job in the divisional sanitary section. I’m still doing nothing and doing it well. Can’t help thinking how lucky “Paddy” Sadleir is to get out into a safe job just before the Big Push starts.

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29 Billy Hughes, Australian Prime Minister since 1915, had been in the Labor Party, but his decision to introduce conscription split the party, which he then left to form the National Labor Party. The conscription referendum of 1916 was lost.
**Friday 4th May.** Glorious but rather enervating weather prevails. With ten others we go on a motor down to Bailleul to help in the erection of more dressing stations. We don’t do too much as Frank and I have to keep two brick layers going, which we do with comparative ease. Had some games of bridge in the evening. How fine the nights are getting although the rumble of guns on various parts of the front continues.

**Saturday 5th May.** In far off dear old Australia a great election is waging today. May Labor win is my deepest wish. We go off to our job at Bailleul and Frank and I still help the “bricky”. In the afternoon I get off for a couple of hours and have a look around the town. These French towns are very much alike. How large and important looking their city squares are - still they lack the beauty of our city squares.

**Sunday 6th May.** Hurray for another mail comes in and fills us all with glee and keeps us quiet for a long time. Frank and I “take” a holiday and go in to Armentières. We get snaps of the boys’ graves. Things are very quiet up in Armentières, although we see where Fritz got four shells within 70 yards of the main dressing station. We hear that Fritz got a shell into one of the 11th FA’s cookhouses and killed one of the cooks.

**Monday 7th May.** Another glorious day and we go off again to Bailleul to our job. Frank and I are still labourers to the bricklayer but we laze idly in the sun on the green warm earth. True ‘tis sweet to be alive these days with the wine of youth richly coursing through your veins. A big bombardment at night but complacently we view and hear it from afar.

**Tuesday 8th May.** A spring drizzle today but it is warm and will speed the growth of the crops that everywhere are to be seen springing into a virile existence. Truant-like we leave our job and go for a walk round the town of Bailleul. All the women in the old houses are lace making. In one place we saw three generations at work nimbly making that lace for which these parts of historic France are noted.

**Wednesday 9th May.** A mail goes out so I do a fair amount of writing. Our boys down on the Somme\(^{30}\) are doing brilliantly. Good luck to them. They are very worthily upholding the nation’s reputation.

**Thursday 10th May.** Weather still dry and fine. Elections seem to indicate heavy defeat of the Labor Party. ‘Tis unfortunate but the movement will rise above these temporary setbacks.

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\(^{30}\) The Somme was a river to the south; site of many WW1 battles.
Friday 11th May. I don’t go out to the job so spend the day reading. In the evening I go to hear the NZ pierrots who maintain their very excellent reputation. Tom O’Hara and I discuss French history and particularly the Revolution period. How strange it seems to be in this historic land where were made some of the greatest landmarks in history.

Saturday 12th May. Down again to my job at Bailleul. The country is beautifully green and the fruit trees are blossoming. In the evening I go down to Ploegsteert wood with Sgt. Holgate. How sublime the wood is now and how terrible, for on the other side of the ridge is our implacable foe. The wood I understand was one of King Albert’s hunting grounds and, with its carpet of wild violets and cowslips, it was a picture.

Sunday 13th May. Our weekly holiday (taken by our own permission). Frank Shaw gets me a ride in one of the cars to Pont de Nieppe. It’s a glorious day and I wished that the ride were a lengthier one. All the country is looking great. A mantle of greenery is thrown over hedge and field but the preparations for the fierce struggle that everyday draws nearer are seen on every hand. They jar against the natural order and beauty that prevail.

Monday 14th May. Another week started and we go again to Bailleul. We are not unduly pressed here and methinks our party has resolved itself into a debating society, that we have characteristically termed the Charles Thompson debating society. You should hear us discuss questions covering almost the ambit of the human mind! But it is amusing and elevating as well, despite the splashing about of bizarre adjectives!

Tuesday 15th May. The days are fine and the weather good. I have a chance of getting a job on the staff of the Deputy Director of Australian Medical Services at Bailleul but the Colonel will not let me go. In a way I’m not sorry although it is a good safe job. What will be the outcome of the crisis in Russia? The doctrine of a peace without annexation and indemnity appeals to me as being a fair and reasonable one.

31 Charles Thompson - a member of the 10th FA apparently very fond of an argument.
32 Crisis in Russia- was the political unrest which was later to lead to Russia withdrawing from the war and the Bolshevik revolution later in 1917.
33 With the war in 1917 at a stalemate, this peace proposal was put forward. It meant a return to previous borders, with no prosecution of leaders or compensation for damage, etc.
Wednesday 16th May. A day of excitement for we hear that the 4th division is coming up to us and intend disentraining at Bailleul right where we are working. Aub Mitchell’s battalion is the 4th so when the first train comes in I rush across to see if I can find him, but without success. Still he finds me in the evening and comes to the DRS. What a great reunion it is. He stays all night and we sleep on the floor of the billet.

Thursday 17th May. Aub Mitchell comes with me to Bailleul. By the strangest of coincidences he happens to be billeted within 100 yards of our job. Isn’t France, albeit the world, a tiny place after all? I play truant from the job and Aub and I go into the town and have a great meal together. In the afternoon we go to Nieppe where George Sadleir entertains us at tea, after which we cap matters by going to the NZ pierrot show.

Friday 18th May. Down again to Bailleul as usual. Aub Mitchell tells me that he is going to his Divisional HQ so I meet him at 4 o’clock and we go to tea in the town, after which we spend a couple of hours at an entertainment given by one of the Tommy regiments. We’ve spent three evenings together and it is cheering to forget some of the phases of this sick, sorry game.

Saturday 19th May. Our job at Bailleul having petered out we decide to take a holiday so a few of us set out for Le Doulieu where some of the 4th division fresh from the Somme and Bullecourt are. I see old Tim Godfrey and have a great time with him. We watch two good games of football - one rugby the other Aus rules - between battalion teams who barely a week ago were participating (according to Bean34) in “that most stubborn and glorious fighting of the war”.

Sunday 20th May. Hooray for my birthday! I hope to spend many more, but not over here or under these conditions. A warm and genial day so, having nothing to do, I set off for Bailleul to take Aub Mitchell up to Armentières. My luck is out for he has left for Le Havre. I go on to Armentières and have a job to cross the bridge at Pont de Nieppe for I have no pass. The sentry is beaten by my jumping into and hiding in one of the countless motor wagons. I meet George Sadleir and we return together, beating the sentry in the same fashion.

Monday 21st May. Twelve of us make a fatigue party to go down to the

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34 War correspondent and author C.E.W. Bean.
trenches at Ploegsteert. Things are pretty warm* here as we soon find out. We camp in the wood on the Armentières side of the ridge. The ridge is catacombed and we see the wonderful galleries made by our, and the Canadian, engineers. Guns are around us everywhere and the din they make all night is terrific. I slept very badly.

**Tuesday 22nd May.** We commence duties at 6am and have to cart bricks up to the trenches where new first aid posts are in course of construction. I don’t fancy some of them for they seem to be close to “pudding” and trench mortar emplacements. There is a drizzling rain falling as we carry our bricks through the trenches and Fritz livens things up by sending some strays across.

**Wednesday 23rd May.** The wood wherein we are encamped is beautiful and the stately oaks and elms have their new fresh raiment of spring. The birds chirp merrily in the trees and leafy undergrowth, despite the terrific din caused by the many guns close by. Sandbag filling today in the trenches. After dinner we have quite a debate on political and religious subjects. I go into Nieppe to hear the NZ pierrots in the night.

**Thursday 24th May.** More brick-bag filling at “Suicide Corner” which as the name indicates is a rather unhealthy part of the globe. One shell comes pretty close and makes our party bob down as one man. Afternoon spent in reading, writing and discussion. Evening the same. I don’t think I’ll regret getting back to L’Estrade for everything (excepting this wood of ours) is more congenial there.

**Friday 25th May.** We’re still carrying bricks up the trenches and Fritz is continually searching with shells for working parties. What tremendous preparations are being made for the Push. It makes one shudder when one sees the potential Death everywhere. I go down to L’Estrade in the evening and have a good sleep, a thing denied in our thickly timbered wood at Ploegsteert because of the many guns that keep barking all round one.

**Saturday 26th May.** A very warm day in the trenches and Fritz keeps us away from our job by his shelling. He gets direct hits on to the very aid posts we’re helping to build. I always thought it sheer madness for these places to be built where they are. I go to the third line trenches in the evening and spend a couple of hours with George Risbey, Gus Pegler,

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35 These mortars were portable artillery consisting of a short, stubby barrel in which a projectile was dropped. They could be used from the trenches. Pudding mortar was so called because it was a spigot mortar that looked like a big pudding on a stick.
Fred Ethel and Hec McLean.

**Sunday 27th May.** Beautiful weather still continues and how glorious are these woods. More brick carrying in the trenches and again we are shelled out. Our relief comes before mid-day and we return to L’Estrade. All along the roads there are guns and shells enough to make the strongest men tremble for the future. I am put on guard duty and go on from 6 till 9.

**Monday 28th May.** I take advantage of having a good sleep in the morning. In the afternoon I go down to the sports at Steenwerck. Our boys sweep everything before them and win the half mile, the 220, high jump, tug of war and bicycle races. A few games of bridge and then another night of undisturbed sleep.

**Tuesday 29th May.** Still on guard duties which are easy. Beautiful weather but how near are the days of awfulness. Common rumour has it that this push at Messines will be the pivotal struggle, upon which the success of this Spring’s offensive will depend.

**Wednesday 30th May.** Continuing on guard duties. Major McMahon sees me and says that on account of my terrible shaking up in the last stunt I am not to take part in the initial stages of the big push but am to go down to do duty at an Officers’ rest home at La Motte. I receive the news with varied feelings for it seems rotten to leave the boys but I know I’m not feeling as well as I might and I daresay it is noticed.

**Thursday 31st May.** It is freely contradicted that I’m to go to La Motte and then all of a sudden we are told to get ready. It is with a big lump in my throat and a pain in my heart that I bid farewell to those dear chums of mine who within a couple of days will be in the Big Push. Good luck to them all - a fervent hope for their safe coming out of it. We arrive at La Motte and the chateau is delightful. I rest during the afternoon and play tennis in the evening.

**Friday 1st June.** This chateau is most beautiful. An old house set in wide tree-covered grounds, it dates back to the 17th century. It was destroyed however when the monarchy was in the stirring days of 1790, then renovated in 1830. A French Baroness occupies a part of the house and leases the remainder to the British Government at a pound [now A$60] a day. I’m yet to learn for whom we are fighting for - the big man seems to be getting the thick end of the stick alright.

**Saturday 2nd June.** Our duties consist in looking after the officers - sort of servants if you like and it strangely jars against that radical spirit of
mine. Still it’s away from the terrible menace of the coming big push and it will give me an excellent chance to gather myself together. We are given the use of the tennis court of an evening and make good use of it.

Sunday 3\textsuperscript{rd} June. Weather still warm and fine. The bells of the Eglise Notre Dame close by, coupled with the happy congenial surroundings, bring a flood of memories of our homeland. Reg Whitefield and I hire bikes and go into Hazebrouck in the afternoon. Here we spend a pleasant time looking round and listening to a fine military band playing on the rotunda in the square. We see the trains taking and bringing French soldiers on leave.

Monday 4\textsuperscript{th} June. A canal winds its way round our chateau and in many respects it is not unlike our channels at Mildura. I sample its delights by having my first swim in France. Another fine day spent in leisurely holiday fashion. What a happy peaceful environment this is - how different from another wood I know barely 30 km away.

Tuesday 5\textsuperscript{th} June. A warm sunny day. We are deeply grieved to hear that George Craven was gassed and that five others are out of action. We can hear the incessant artillery fire from here and constantly our thoughts are on the boys. The tragedy of it all is entering like iron into my soul. Tom McKeon and I argue the possibilities of peace - he from the conquest idea and I from the idea of no annexation/ no indemnity.

Wednesday 6\textsuperscript{th} June. A warm muggy day. I have an excellent swim in the canal. We have quite a cosmopolitan lot here; Scotties, Irish boys, a Canadian, some NZ and we Aussies. They all are heartily sick of the war and wish as much as any of us for the struggle to finish. Don’t tell me that the soldier is not fed up with it; the evidence is overwhelming.

Thursday 7\textsuperscript{th} June. We hear the rumble of guns that indicates the preliminary bombardment before the attack on the Ypres-Messines sector\textsuperscript{36}. More swimming and tennis and how different I’m feeling as a result of the change here.

Friday 8\textsuperscript{th} June. I understand the boys go over early this morning on their attack on Messines. Good luck to them - may their efforts result in an early peace. We are still here at La Motte au Bois (as it is called) and

\textsuperscript{36} This battle began with the explosion at 3am of 19 enormous mines buried under the German trenches. The mines could be heard in London, 200 km away. The 9\textsuperscript{th}, 10\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th} Anzac corps would capture Messines Ridge by June 14, with 16,000 casualties.
a fine peaceful spot of France it is.

**Saturday 9th June.** Weather continues fine and dry and by the rumble of guns we glean that Fritz is vigorously counter-attacking. I am very interested in the rural conditions that attain. The farmers believe in intense cultivation and look after their land very well and industriously, although there is an absence of scientific conditions.

**Sunday 10th June.** I hire a bike and set off for L’Estrade to hear the news of the boys. I pass through Bailleul *en route* and am struck by the activity. Motor ambulances in endless column all too clearly tell of the battle. I have bad luck to miss Aub Mitchell who has gone to Le Harve again. Back at L’Estrade I hear that poor old Harry Ryall had been killed and about 20 others wounded or gassed.

**Monday 11th June.** Last night the NZ pierrots paid a visit to our chateau and gave an open air entertainment on the tennis court. News has reached me that another old pal in Fred Ethel has been killed. He makes the fifth Mildura boy in the division who has paid the big price.

**Tuesday 12th June.** I think I’m on to a new job at the chateau in the orderly room and I’d much rather it than general duty work. It will be more congenial. I start duties in the office in the afternoon. Practically nothing to do but read and write.

**Wednesday 13th June.** Have taken up the new job and it is *très bon.* It reminds me of old times when I drove the quill* for a humble crust. Our office is a very fine room on the walls of which are many trophies of the chase. Looking out the open windows the large expanse of parklands reminds me of peaceful Australia.

**Thursday 14th June.** We sample some of the strawberries from the kitchen garden. I wonder what the baroness would say were she to know. The beauty of this place is beyond description. Whilst one is here there is a peculiar feeling of peace and contentment, a going back as it were to the really happy pre-war days.

**Friday 15th June.** Orderly room work is not very strenuous, so I read a bit and “stew” up some of my much-neglected French. In the evening Popple and I give Tom McKeon and Snowy Lloyd a bad doing at tennis when we win a rubber* three-love. Afterwards we have a good swim in the canal. Oh! This is the life alright.

**Saturday 16th June.** We hear that we are to go back and our rumours are well founded for Colonel Purdy and Sgts Jack Rohan and Dave O’Keefe come down to take Tom McKeon and me back. We don’t
leave until the afternoon as we show the Sergeants and Frank Shaw all over the ground and, besides making a raid on the strawberry garden, we swim in the canal. Back again at night at L’Estrade and welcoming all the boys.

**Sunday 17th June.** At last the long sought mail has come in and we get letters up to the first of May. I get all the experiences of the boys in the big battle of Messines and I hear too that old Mildura pals in Reg Meredith, Jim Lawler, Hec McLean and Fred Ethel went out in the big stunt. How it has grieved me for they were all of the very best.

**Monday 18th June.** I strike a job on duck-board fatigue and we have to take up and re-lay the boards. Not a bad job despite the rising thermometer. We all make off in the evening for the River Lys where a great swim is indulged in. The water is warm and good and Fritz’s shells are coming over but well to our right.

**Tuesday 19th June.** Still on the duck-board job with Wal Penny and Horry Hawkins. More swimming in the evening and it is a joyful reminder of home. I daresay Fritz swims in this same stream some miles below where we go in, for it runs through territory still held by him. I must pay tribute to the wonderful bravery displayed by George Risbey the other day at Ploegsteert when he went out and brought in a man under heavy fire.

**Wednesday 20th June.** Still on duck-board fatigue. I get the afternoon off and go down to Bailleul - sneaking down in the same car as the colonel. Efforts to find Aub Mitchell result in my finding that his APM [Assistant Provost Marshall, the unit policeman] is at Vieux Berquin. Quite a collection of guns taken in the Messines fight were on show in the square including some whizz bang guns to be presented to the State of Victoria. I see Norm Dickenson who has a job on Headquarters staff.

**Thursday 21st June.** Much activity is going on in the air and it is nothing to see about 15 of our balloons up and an almost equal number of Fritz’s. Yesterday one of Fritz’s planes brought two of our balloons down in flames. Some talk of A section moving out to Bailleul.
Friday 22nd June. A fairly quiet uneventful day. I have a new job on the mess room staff and it’s good-o. We hear that there is some disaffection existing in the French ranks and that they will not put in another winter in the trenches\(^{37}\). They can be no sicker of the game than we are, but it is futile to think that victory by conquest can come this year.

Saturday 23rd June. An exciting day in the air for a couple of Fritz’s planes make a brilliant assault on a complete line of our observation balloons and succeed in bringing three down in flames. Later in the day a German plane is brought down close to our camp and I rush (with many thousand other fellows) over to see it. One of the airmen is killed, the other badly wounded. The machine is practically torn to pieces by the souvenir hunters\(^{38}\) and I manage to get a couple of pieces.

Sunday 24th June. Frank Shaw and I get leave to go up to Armentières. On our way we see another of our balloons brought down. Pont de Nieppe suffered badly during the last attack and we saw very few people about. Armentières is being shelled every day but very few of the people have gone away. We went to the cemetery and saw the boys’ graves. Alf Park’s grave was a mass of roses and pansies.

Monday 25th June. The old order changeth and so our unit is changing for many new reinforcements have arrived. About seven of our section got Blighties in the Messines stunt namely Perce Thomas, Lou Lauer, Murray Wilson, Wal Gillett, Griff Evans and “Dizzy” Johnston. A section has gone to a DRS at Bailleul but we still stay on at L’Estrade.

Tuesday 26th June. There is some talk of a swimming carnival at which the NZ Field Ambulance, the Casualty Clearing Station and ourselves are to compete, so Major Kenny takes some of us down to the river Lys for a “try out”. We have two tests over 50 and 440 yards and I manage to win both. Still, many of the boys in A section didn’t compete.

Wednesday 27th June. Still taking things easy at L’Estrade and am on my job in the mess room. Chatting to some of our new reinforcements I find that they come from NSW and South Australia but there is among them one boy who was a tent mate of mine at Royal Park when I first

\(^{37}\) In the offensive of May 1917 under General Niville, the French lost so many men in terrible conditions that there was mutiny and desertions. Many soldiers went “on strike”, refusing to attack when ordered.

\(^{38}\) Australian soldiers were notorious for taking souvenirs, especially off German prisoners, a practice known as “ratting”.

went into the AMC there. What humorous times we have in the mess room with our great quartet: Dangles, Bodie, Peter Dredge and I.

**Thursday 28th June.** Weather cool with occasional showers of rain which the farming Froggies won’t mind, but our boys up on Messines ridge will find uncomfortable. I see that my old chum Bill Rainbow of Mildura has been killed down on the Somme. The terrible pity of it all. How keenly I feel when these boys go out. Yet the tragedy goes on and youth and manhood is paying the fearful sacrifice.

**Friday 29th June.** The papers tell us of another blunder of the authorities and the Mesopotamian affair\(^39\) leaves an unpleasant taste in the mouth. I’m afraid the young democrats who are bearing the heat and burden of this war will have something to say in regard to administration after the war.

**Saturday 30th June.** It’s still rather warm down Messines way and the 11\(^{th}\) Field Ambulance suffered four casualties last night. stretcher bearing is very warm there and I believe we move thither in a few days’ time.

**Sunday 1st July.** A quiet day with nothing startling occurring. We’ve heard that all our May letters home have been lost and it makes us feel rather disappointed.

**Monday 2nd July.** We hear that Major-General Holmes GOC 4\(^{th}\) Division was killed at Ploegsteert while showing W.A. Holman (Premier of NSW) round. One of the captive balloons is right over us now so there’ll be some fun yet. We have a very lively time at night. It is a fine clear night with the moon at the full and several German planes drop bombs all round our camp creating consternation among men and patients alike.

**Tuesday 3rd July.** Still at L’Estrade and working in the mess room. I go for a ride in one of the cars with Frank to Bailleul. Afterwards go to 2\(^{nd}\) Casualty Clearing Station and see where George Craven is buried. Lieutenant Schuler and General Holmes are also buried there.

\(^{39}\) Mesopotamian affair- refers to the results of the British commission of inquiry into the disastrous campaign in what is now Iraq, which cost over 30,000 Anglo-Indian troops.
Later on I go to the Birdcage\textsuperscript{40} to see if Aub Mitchell is there, but meet him on the way back to L’Estrade where, strangely enough, he has been waiting to see me.

**Wednesday 4\textsuperscript{th} July.** I go up and see Aub Mitchell again and then get a ride with Frank and Bert Brown to Mont des Cats where all the cases of scabies are isolated. It is a monastery situated on the top of a high hill from which a wonderful view of the surrounding undulating country was obtained. Feasted my eyes on it, for it is great and so different from the flat country where we have hung round so long. Met Alec Hoggart, Jack Stevens and Bill Godfrey who have all returned from Blighty.

**Thursday 5\textsuperscript{th} July.** Last night I went down to the YMCA at Steenwerck where a discussion took place on peace and Mr Lloyd George’s speech\textsuperscript{41} on suggested [peace] terms. Quite an animated debate took place and six out of the seven debaters were out of our unit. I had a few words to say on the Democratising of Institutions, our own as well as foreign. Fritz comes over again in the night and gives us some exhibitions of bomb dropping.

**Friday 6\textsuperscript{th} July.** Still at L’Estrade but there are rumours of an early departure for the line. We remain on our old job looking after the mess room. See Aub Mitchell and we go to Steenwerck to try and see the pictures but “full house” prevents us from getting a seat. Fritz again is busy with his planes and many bombs are dropped and a small arms dump goes up in smoke.

**Saturday 7\textsuperscript{th} July.** The bomb dropping excursions of Fritz’s are not conducive to good restful sleep and as a consequence of broken sleep one has to snatch an hour of two during the day. General Godley distributes awards at Bailleul and our awards are as follows:

- DSO [Distinguished Service Order]: Colonel Purdy (OC)
- MC - [Military Cross]: Capt. Webster
- DCM - [Distinguished Conduct Medal]: Sgt. D. O’Keefe

Aub and I go to the pictures at Steenwerck.

**Sunday 8\textsuperscript{th} July.** Much thunder and lightning followed by heavy rain prevents Fritz coming across so we sleep without interruption, for

\textsuperscript{40} The Birdcage was a club in Armentières.

\textsuperscript{41} David Lloyd George, British PM from 1916 to 1922.
which many thanks. The bomb attacks the other night did damage to the hospital we helped to erect at Bailleul. Spent a quiet uneventful Sunday. Paddy Sadleir comes down and we have some games of bridge. Later in the evening I go over to the Birdcage and see Aub Mitchell.

**Monday 9th July.** B Section are getting ready to move out and we follow a day later. In the afternoon Aub Mitchell and I go into Bailleul. After tea we hear the Coo-ees (3rd Divy concert troupe). Luck favours us as we get a ride both ways in motors. It is damn rotten luck to learn that our incoming Australian mail has been torpedoed. It means no Australian letters for three weeks.

**Tuesday 10th July.** B Section move off for the line at 3am. Coincident with their going away a Fritz plane drops bombs close to us again. News reaches us during the day that one of our reinforcements had been killed after having been in the line for three hours only - a boy named Pohlson - and Perce Sampson was shell-shocked. Went round to see Aub Mitchell again.

**Wednesday 11th July.** Up at 3am and moved off from L’Estrade, which was a happy home for some months. We are taken up to Kandahar Farm Main Dressing Station [near Neuve Eglise] in cars and after a short rest go up into the line which is up on Messines ridge - country held by Fritz up to two months ago. Unbearable Trench is our “possy” and we found the name very apt. We had four carries and were going strong for five hours. Messines is a brick heap. Continuous shelling all round us day and night.

**Thursday 12th July.** Dangles was funny last night. He got shick* on rum that was given out after our strenuous work, but he managed to sleep for the dope acted well. For the three of us sleep was out of the question as Fritz was sending everything over from lice to gas shells. Glad when our relief came at 10.30. We go back to the MDS for sleep and rest. I go for a run in the car with Bert Curwin, but the car is blocked and I have to walk with Capt Glassford to the ADS at Gooseberry farm.

**Friday 13th July.** Had a good sleep and rest at the MDS last night and spent a fairly easy day. It is a good idea our going into the trenches for 24 hours and then coming out for 48. It is almost impossible to get any sleep in the line, for you get plenty of work and the shelling is incessant.

Walked after tea to Mont Kemmel from which a magnificent view East, South-East and North-East was obtained. Could see the ruins of Ypres,
Hill 60, the craters dominating Messines Ridge\textsuperscript{42} and the town of Wameton.

**Saturday 14\textsuperscript{th} July.** Moved up the line again and I took up same position in Unbearable Trench with Sid Webb, Owey Bannister and Paddy Doyle. We get plenty of work during the day but fortunately none during the night. Just as well too for it rains heavily and the tracks get very greasy. Plenty of straffing continues and the old Messines ridge is a very warm place. We had very little sleep and got very wet in our mock dugout.

**Sunday 15\textsuperscript{th} July.** Relieved by A Section at 8 o’clock. It is welcome to get back to the MDS for a wash, rest and sleep. The poor old infantry boys get a rough time with their 18 days in at a stretch, nine of which are spent in support trenches and the remainder in the front line. In the afternoon I go with Sgt Holgate and some of the boys to Mont Kemmel and we get a wonderful view of the Ypres-Armentières sector. With glasses [binoculars] Messines, Comines, Loyslette and other towns still held by Fritz could be seen.

**Monday 16\textsuperscript{th} July.** Resting at Kandahar Farm dressing station. Stan Sievewright and I go down to a little creek and I have a good bath and I wash my silk underclothes. Silk is worth its weight in gold these days when lice and fleas are so plentiful. So far I’ve beaten them. Sad news on hearing that Quin Crawford was killed and Jack Curnick got both his legs broken. They were blown up at St Quentine’s Post. Wilkinson, one of the reinforcements was also wounded last night. I saw Peb Howitt in the supports.

**Tuesday 17\textsuperscript{th} July.** Didn’t get much sleep during the night as Fritz put some high velocity shells very close to us. We move off at 6am for the line and again I go to Unbearable Trench with Dangles, Roy Duckett and Les Presnall. We have a good quiet day but there is plenty of straffing after dark and (as gas shells are coming across too freely) we are advised by the gas guards to keep our masks ready. (George Risbey got a touch of the new gas and went on.)

**Wednesday 18\textsuperscript{th} July.** We all got a taste of the gas last night but it wasn’t much, only enough to make you sneeze. Relieved again by A section we move back to the MDS. What a lovely 15-inch gun we have near us. It is bent on smashing some of Fritz’s waterworks, as he is

\textsuperscript{42} Hill 60 was made from the spoil of railway cutting and was a site of many battles. The craters of Messines were due to the mines exploded there on June 7.
using the Lys and canals for bringing up supplies and ammunition. Spent the afternoon resting and playing bridge.

**Thursday 19\(^{th}\) July.** Major McMahon gets me a job in the new canteen we have established here, but it will not interfere with my work up on the line. Ted Ellis and I have a busy day in the canteen and we sell 500 francs worth of goods - chiefly beer. The success of the canteen is assured. Stan Shilliday and Pascoe Beverley have been asking for me up in the line, but I’ve been on the South sector each time.

**Friday 20\(^{th}\) July.** Off again at 6.30am for the line. This time I am stationed at the ADS at Gooseberry Farm with Dangles, Alf Harris and Jack Nugent. Rather a quiet day but we have to go on to the Railhead at 1am to help a party there. I was up before the Colonel the other day for being out of billets after hours. The case was wretchedly trivial but a Tommy was the Informant. The Colonel dismisses the case. (Lance Corporal Baker gets leave to Paris - lucky dog.)

**Saturday 21\(^{st}\) July.** We are relieved and return to the MDS. I give Ted Ellis a hand in the canteen. Fritz continues straffing the railway just by our dressing station. In the evening we go across and watch them firing the 15” gun. The shell is 4’10” in length and is ¾ of a ton in weight - what a terrible instrument of destruction to be sure. I hear that another stunt is coming off in a day or two.

**Sunday 22\(^{nd}\) July.** Still at the MDS. Fine warm day with a cool wind tempering the heat of the sun. I fancy Fritz is after the big 15” gun for he landed a big shell within 100 yards of us this morning. Some of us are sent down to the transport lines so off we go. We find out that some of the transport boys have volunteered to do a little stretcher-bearing so we are taking their places. Poor old Les Krause our famous boxer, runner and footballer was killed by a whizz-bang early today.

**Monday 23\(^{rd}\) July.** Saw Stan Shilliday, Pascoe Beverley and Frank Fisher over in the 38\(^{th}\) Battalion lines last night. Spent first day on transport duties, grooming, feeding horses etc. Not a bad job but one is tied down a little. In the evening I go across to 38\(^{th}\) transport lines and see Paddy Young, Wally Baldwin and Hec Down. Who should come whilst I’m there but Ernie Rowe, who was one of the first Mildura boys to enlist. Fritz sent some shells very close to our lines during the night and killed a couple of men.

**Tuesday 24\(^{th}\) July.** Received my birthday cake from [my sisters] Dor and Toots and it was in excellent condition. What a change to get some pure wholesome Australian food again. Seeing that we are getting jam
made in Australia for the last two months it points to the shortage of 
food in the old country. How different must it be in Australia with a 
plentitude of all foodstuffs.

**Wednesday 25th July.** Still down with transport; grooming, feeding and 
looking after the nags. It rains today so we don’t do too much grooming. 
Pay day but I only draw five Francs, as I want some money on my book 
in case there is any leave knocking about. Plenty of aerial activity so a 
stunt must be shortly coming off.

**Thursday 26th July.** Hooray for an Aussie mail which brings me 14 
letters. It seems that all the Unit papers I sent home to Australia reached 
their destinations. A fairly quiet, uneventful day with preparations 
generally for the coming stunt, after which according to furphy* the 
division is to come out for rest and re-organisation.

Since I wrote the foregoing I’ve been almost snatched by the Grim 
Reaper. At about 10 o’clock a high velocity shell caught our dugout, 
and as I was the only one in it, I got a knock on the leg. It was a terrible 
experience but I got out of it lightly. Corporal Brown had a marvellous 
escape for he stayed outside. When the shell came and hit, it tore his 
bed to ribbons. They go up for a car and I am taken to the MDS where 
Capt Webster dresses my wound. From there I am sent to Westof where 
I see Major Williams who sends me down to the Casualty Clearing 
Station where I arrive at about 2am.

**Friday 27th July.** Major Barton sees me at 5am and tickets me to go 
down on the hospital train. I have a chat to Maurice Davies and Percy 
Sampson before leaving. Jack Curnick is on the same train and we leave 
at 8am. Spend all day and night in the train and pass through very good 
country, crops looking their best. See a little of Calais from my stretcher 
and then fitfully sleep whilst the train rumbles on with its tragic load of 
disabled humanity.

**Saturday 28th July.** Still in the hospital train and it is noon ere we 
arrive at the historical town of Rouen. Here we are disentrained and 
taken in ambulances to the XI British Stationary Hospital. The question 
now is to Blighty or not? I’m hopeful of getting there. MO examines my 
leg and a further small puncture wound is discovered. What a change to 
be between sheets again in an open marquee.

**Sunday 29th July.** A day in bed between good sweet clean sheets. The 
tucker is wretched - far worse than we got in the lines and it was bad 
enough there. It rains very heavily during the night but our marquee is
watertight.

**Monday 30th July.** At last I know my fate and I am marked for Blighty as a lying case. My spirits have soared to the Heavens at the prospect of getting to England.

**Tuesday 31st July.** Our hopes are back again to zero for we are told that the ports have been closed for eight days so it means that if we get better before then it will be goodbye to Blighty. The MO looking after me is a Captain Fargie and he hails from Wentworth. He and I talk over matters of local interest. Great and welcome surprise on seeing Daisy Hamilton who comes to see me. What a great chat we have.

**Wednesday 1st August.** Still in bed, but my leg is getting better very quickly - too quickly in fact as it might settle my chances of going to Blighty. The food in this hospital is very wretched and is poor sustenance for wounded men. Daisy Hamilton comes to see me again. She is in the WAAC [Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps] and is stationed at Rouen. Our hospital is about two and a half miles out of the town.

**Thursday 2nd August.** Still in bed. Plenty of rumours flying around to the effect that we are not going to Blighty for a week or so. How eagerly I am looking forward to getting across. A wet miserable day outdoors so I’m lucky to be in bed. The boys on the Flanders front will strike it rough.

**Friday 3rd August.** We get a surprise as a Blighty boat leaves and takes six from our ward but I am not among the fortunates. Talk about lead-swinging*. It is one of the funniest things out to see all the fellows using their heads to get across to Blighty and I don’t blame them either.

**Saturday 4th August.** Still wet and miserable weather so I don’t mind being confined to my bed. I am getting on very well but am sick of this hospital and won’t be sorry when the Blighty boat comes in. The weather has effected the push up Flanders. We are entering on the fourth year of war and I am being further convinced that the doctrine of victory by conquest doesn’t appeal to the man in the trenches - if it does to the non-fighting public.

**Sunday 5th August.** Dad (an old Tommy soldier) and several more fellows in our ward leave for Blighty and make us, whose turn has not yet come, very envious. Daisy Hamilton comes out to see me again and stays for several hours. Her visit is very cheering and helps me to pass

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43 There was a major British offensive in Ypres, Flanders from 31/7 to 6/11/17.
hours that drag along on “ledging wings”.

**Monday 6th August.** Still here in hospital and the NZ doctor lets me get up and says my progress is so rapid that I may go to Convalescent Camp instead of Blighty. Hence my uneasiness all day. It will be rotten if I miss the Blighty trip at this the eleventh hour. Oh Blighty what a soldiers’ Elysium thou art! Nothing is dearer to our hearts than to reach your war-scarless shores.

**Tuesday 7th August.** What is my fate to be? The MO sees my leg and says if its progress continues I must be marked off the Blighty list. Oh my feelings of dismay. One o’clock and the most welcome of surprises - Sister brings me my Blighty ticket so, at a quarter to two, I say goodbye to the hospital and am soon on the hospital train speeding down to Le Havre. We get to the port at 8.30 and are on the boat at 9.30, but only move out into the harbour.

**Wednesday 8th August.** I’m still on the hospital boat, which is at anchor in the harbour. The appointments on board are very clean and fine and I quite enjoy my little wooden cot. An MO goes round and looks at all the wounds. Food and attention are good. There are no sisters on board owing to the submarine menace and the boat does not bear the Red Cross markings. Our boat moves off with torpedo destroyer escorts fore and aft at 9.30pm, so tomorrow we’ll be in Blighty.

**Thursday 9th August.** Our hospital ship reaches Southampton at about 8.30am, but it is after 10 before we are disembarked. Shortly after we are entrained and are soon speeding up towards London. How different in comfort and speed are these English trains after the French trains and how different (pleasingly so) is the English scenery. We pass through the outskirts of London - Richmond, etc and then go up to Northampton in the Midlands, where we disentrain and are taken to a hospital about three miles away. Note: strange coincidence to think that we landed at Plymouth 12 months ago today.

**Friday 10th August.** In bed in hospital here and it’s not too bad. Meals and attention are good. I pass the time reading and writing and quite enjoy the pleasant rest. In the evening I get another anti-tetanus injection in the arm and it’s rather painful. There are plenty of bad cases in this hospital - human wreckage out of our inhuman storm.

**Saturday 11th August.** The MO, who by the way is a woman, allows me to get up after dinner so I take advantage of it and get into the personalised “wounded clothes”. I have a walk round the grounds for
this hospital was once an asylum. I’m not too strong yet so don’t walk far. It rains on and off during the day. My arm is very painful as a result of the inoculation.

**Sunday 12th August.** I get up during the afternoon and walk round to the YMCA which has a fine hut in the hospital grounds. There is a musical soirée but it’s not up to much. Stockholm conference\(^44\) is arousing much interest. Despite the efforts of the jingoes\(^*,\) I think it is a triumph for socialist intervention. As Snowden\(^45\) says, Governments have failed to bring peace so let the people try.

**Monday 13th August.** I spent a very restless night last night. Quite the worst for a very long time. I pay a visit to the dentist for another filling. There are some characters in this ward. Some boys with almost three years service across the way but they all long for peace and agree as to the futility of the victory by conquest idea.

**Tuesday 14th August.** At Northampton war hospital still and I’m not in a hurry to get away, for the sooner I do the quicker I’ll be back in France. Stockholm conference is still the principal object of discussion in England but the Government and its jingoistic supporters intend to prevent it if they can.

**Wednesday 15th August.** I’m up and moving about pretty freely and still don’t feel too strong. A spell at the convalescent hospital will quickly get me right again. We have several photos taken in the ward.

**Thursday 16th August.** Getting along très bon. We have an entertainment today in the theatre here in the hospital. Quite a sight to see the boys enjoying the various items from their cots and stretchers and chairs. Some of the items are good but the majority are very indifferent.

**Friday 17th August.** A fairly uneventful day. I wander round to the YMCA and have a bit of a read and do a little writing. What a pleasure to be having a really good and easy time and a warm, comfortable bed at night. France and the misery of the trenches is forgotten over here.

**Saturday 18th August.** Another pleasant day and in the afternoon I take

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\(^{44}\) A peace conference between socialists from allied and central powers, held in neutral Stockholm. The British Labour Party representative attempted to prevent Russia pulling out of the war.

\(^{45}\) Lord Snowden - MP and chairman of the Independent Labour Party, he excelled in debates on social and economic questions in the House of Commons.
Ern O’Connor round to the YMCA where we have tea and hear a concert which isn’t at all bad. There are some good musical items including Chopin’s *Nocturne* and Verdi’s *Il Trovatore*.

**Sunday 19th August.** I wheel Ern O’Connor round the grounds in his chair. Our hospital is situated on a hill from which capital views of the surrounding rural country can be obtained. It looks like the views one gets in Malvern looking out towards Canterbury and Box Hill, only it is a little more rural.

**Monday 20th August.** Both Ern and I are marked out for the Auxiliary hospital whither we go on Friday. In the afternoon ten of us go for a drive over to Harleston House, the home of the Duchess of Grafton. We are all presented to the Duchess who is 86 years old, after which we have a good tea and then some lawn croquet and other games. It is a capital afternoon’s outing.

**Tuesday 21st August.** I draw my Australian kit which is very good. Much better than the English articles. In the afternoon, Jones (a Welsh boy) and I get passes and go into the town of Northampton. We have an interesting afternoon looking round the town, which is famous for its boot factories. I am interested in a statue of Charles Bradlaugh, the famous reformer who represented the town in Parliament for 11 years.

**Wednesday 22nd August.** Feeling a little tired after yesterday’s visit to the town so stay in bed for a few hours extra. Instead of going to one of the local auxiliary hospitals we have been marked out to an Aussy auxiliary, so will probably go on to Harefield.

**Thursday 23rd August.** A fairly uneventful day spent in reading, writing and helping generally in the ward. A big convoy of wounded comes in during the night, so a lot of the boys of the ward are being shifted out to other auxiliary hospitals.

**Friday 24th August.** Still having a good and comparatively lazy time. Nothing startling to report. We have plenty of fun and arguments in the ward and I meet a couple of chums whose views on the state of society and the earnest desire for a reconstruction agree with mine.
Saturday 25th August. A nice, agreeable day and I get leave to go down to the town. Plenty of people about and I notice a very large number of fellows wearing the “silver badge”\(^{46}\). I do a little shopping, have afternoon tea and return as there is no excitement.

Sunday 26th August. I stay in the ward all day, as it is wet and miserable out of doors. We are marked out now and 80 of us Australians are to go to Harefield on Wednesday next to our own auxiliary hospital.

Monday 27th August. As there is nothing to do I get another pass to go into the town. I meet some very nice people and am taken to afternoon tea. Later on I spend an hour at the pictures and as it is pouring heavily when I come out I endeavour unsuccessfully to get a taxi. My pass was only till 8 o’clock and it was after 9 when I got in and to cap matters I ran into sister - so was reported.

Tuesday 28th August. Sgt. Major interviews me for being late in last night, but I point out the circumstances and he decides to accept my explanation. Have to draw my kit to be in readiness for tomorrow’s departure. I spend my last night at the YMCA. Say what critics will, the YMCA is doing magnificent work everywhere, in France particularly.

Note: I receive my Aussie mail from France and it is very welcome.

Wednesday 29th August. My last day in Duston war hospital Northampton. About 80 of us Aussies leave for Harefield at 9.30. Some of the lady doctors take a group photo before we leave. We reach Euston at 12.30 and cars take us to Kings Cross where we leave for Harefield, which is reached at 1.30. We are very hungry and do justice to the dinner awaiting us. The afternoon is spent in handing in kit etc.

Thursday 30th August. A day of strange re-unions down here at Harefield. The place isn’t at all bad and the food is much better than that of the other hospitals I have been in. I run across Archie Brighton, who has lost an arm, and then who should I see but young Roy Wallace who was waiting to undergo an operation. Also saw Ern Pasque, Capt McWilliams and Tom Wescombe - all Milduraites.

Friday 31st August. I again see Roy Wallace and have a good chat over things in general and his prospects of returning to Aussie in particular. Get a big surprise to hear later on in the day that I’m to go on furlough

\(^{46}\) Indicating that they were ex-soldiers, so could not be accused of avoiding fighting.
tomorrow. The evening has then to be spent in writing and in getting ready to leave.

**Saturday 1st September.** On the move from before 7am drawing kit etc. We leave Harefield at 9.20 and get up to London before 10am. I spend most of the morning at AIF Headquarters [Horseferry Rd] getting fixed up. See Jack Furze and he tells me where Gus Hart is. I see Gus and have lunch with him and then go for a bus ride out to Hampton Heath. Gus then takes me to dinner after which I go out to Walthamstow and stay with Harry Smith [Father of Bill Jeffries Smith].

**Sunday 2nd September.** It turns out excellently fine so Harry and I go for a long walk in the morning through Epping forest. It is extraordinary that this fine forest should be so close to London. We go for another walk in the afternoon and Harry takes a couple of snaps of me. I go with Miss Smith to church in the evening and have had a fine, enjoyable day - quite a reminder of old times.

**Monday 3rd September.** I stayed over the weekend with Harry. I go up to the City and see Mr Evans with a view to trying to get his assistance in my efforts for a job in AIF Headquarters, as I see quite a number of my pals there who have never heard a gun go off yet! Do the Empire Theatre in the evening, there being a review entitled *Topsy Turvy*. I sleep at the YMCA.

**Tuesday 4th September.** Another fine day and I am still in the City with Mr Evans. We go round to Headquarters but things look hopeless. I have dinner at the Anzac Buffet and a very good one it was. Mr Evans and I discuss several business matters and he is promising me something big if I care to go with him in the future. I leave for Liverpool by 5.55 and arrive about 10 o’clock.

**Wednesday 5th September.** I stay at the St George Hotel and spend the day in seeing the City and then in the evening meet Mr Chelioli on my way out to his place. I am warmly welcomed there and immediately made at home. What a delight it is to have all the comforts of life - to be back in a wholesome environment.

**Thursday 6th September.** I go for a walk in the morning with Mrs Irene Chelioli and we send the boys a parcel. In the afternoon we go to the Walker picture gallery where there are some excellent pictures

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47 Club where meals and entertainment were free for serving men. Funded by expatriate Australians in London.
including some Romneys, Reynolds, Gainsboroughs and Constables. We all go to the pictures at Waterloo in the evening.

**Friday 7th September.** A rather quiet day with the weather still holding good. We go for a walk round the foreshore in the morning and spend the afternoon in reading. In the evening we stay in and have quite a family gathering; reading and light discussion of various topics.

**Saturday 8th September.** I’m still Mrs Chelioli’s guest and am having a nice quiet time. With her son I go to see a League soccer match between Liverpool and Port Vale won by the former four to nil. It was a good game and greatly impressed me. In the evening Mrs Chelioli has some friends round and we have a musical and bridge evening.

**Sunday 9th September.** Stafey [Chelioli] and I go for a Sunday morning’s stroll down on the foreshore and there squatting on the sand we look across the Irish Sea whilst to our left in dim outline we get glimpses of the Welsh mountains. I read in the afternoon and in the evening with Stafey and one of his pals go down to Southport, a watering place 20 miles from Liverpool. We had a look round and then heard a fine band performance.

**Monday 10th September.** My last day in Liverpool so I read and take things quietly. We make a little party for the theatre in the evening and see Mathews and Lang in *Undercover*. It was a good light drama and I enjoyed it. The Cheliolises have been very good to me and have made my stay with them most enjoyable.

**Tuesday 11th September.** Up at 6.30am in order to catch the 9.30 train for Glasgow. I travel up with a New Zealander and we chum up. The scenery as we get up north away from the Midlands is very good. In the afternoon we are in Scotland and by 5 o’clock are in Glasgow, the famous City of Industry. We have a look round the city before dinner and then after dinner go up towards the University and Art gallery, both of which buildings have nice surroundings.

**Wednesday 12th September.** The weather is fine and I am pleased for we had planned a trip up to Loch Lomond. Leave by train at 10.30 and get down to the Loch at 12. Here we go on the boat and go up the Loch to Inversnaid. The scenery is wonderful and I doubt whether I’ve ever spent a more enjoyable day. We get back to Glasgow at 8 o’clock and I catch a troop train at 10 o’clock on my way back to London.

**Thursday 13th September.** I leave the train at Rugby at 6am and have a look round this famous school-town. At 8 o’clock I go on to
Northampton to see all my old pals in the hospital. I spend the afternoon with them and then go to a friend’s place to dinner and afterwards to the theatre. It rained a little during the day - the first rain that I’ve had all the time I’ve been on furlough.

**Friday 14th September.** I leave Northampton by the 8.44am train and reach London at 10. It is a glorious day and I take a bus out to Walthamstow to see the Smiths again. I receive some welcome Aussky letters there. Later on in the day I run out to Hammersmith and meet Mr Chelioli and his wife. I have dinner with Gus Hart and go with him to one of the music halls.

**Saturday 15th September.** Another glorious day. My last half day of furlough and it is bright and fine. I go with Gus to AIF Headquarters and see Murdoch Spencer. Afterwards Mr Evans and I go round there again with a view to seeing if there is anything doing but unless I’m a C Class\(^{48}\) man my chances are napoo*. I have my photo taken, London is said goodbye to at 1 o’clock and our train rattles us down to Hurdcott, which is beyond Salisbury.

**Sunday 16th September.** This convalescent camp is situated about ten miles beyond Salisbury and close to Wilton, where our boys had such an enjoyable bivouac about a year ago. A natural amphitheatre surrounds our camp and on the summit of this chalky hill appears a map of Australia with a flagpole from which floats our national flag. The food, though plain, is good. I am classified B1A2, so am getting nearer to France every day.

**Monday 17th September.** All field ambulance men have to parade* before the SMO [Staff Medical Officer], and he gives us a job. I, strangely enough, strike my old job as mess orderly. We have nothing to do as we were given a TB inoculation yesterday. I’m getting quite used to the needle by now with the numerous and different inoculations I have had. It is a wet miserable day.

**Tuesday 18th September.** Another wet miserable day and I am on a dental parade but whilst waiting our turn we are given a strenuous hour’s physical jerks. More jerks in the afternoon in one of the huts as it is raining heavily. Rather boring doing these exercises again but they help to build me up. I spend the evening at the YMCA where a picture

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\(^{48}\) C Class, B1A2 etc, were health ratings indicating if a soldier was suitable to fight (A grade) or unable to return to duty (C grade). In B1A2, the first part referred to physical health, the second to mental condition.
show is given.

**Wednesday 19th September.** Still raining yet we parade in it all and I’m rather amused at the remarks of our Company Commanding Officer. You get hell if you come on parade unshaved or with dirty boots or if your hair is a little lengthy. It will be a happy day when I am out of all this military rot. “Once a soldier always a soldier”, said our CO today and I thought “Once a soldier, never again a man…”

**Thursday 20th September.** I am up for classification again but there is no alteration made in my category and I’m still B1A2. I am transferred to the Staff Company and am attached to the AMC for duty. I get a job as mess orderly so am back again to the same job that I had at L’Estrade in France. Gee but they were good days with the boys. Heard a concert in the night but it was very poor.

**Friday 21st September.** The mess orderly job isn’t bad and it saves me from physical jerks and parades, so hurrah for small mercies. Food is fairly good here and the camp being admirably situated I am becoming fairly contented. I have struck some good fellows too and have met some old Prahran boys including Harold Lawrence who (though only a Lilliputian*) has a wonderful record to his name.

**Saturday 22nd September.** I receive word that five pounds [now $300] has been cabled to me but from whom I cannot say. It is very acceptable for funds are getting low and one spends a few shillings in stamps and supplies at the YMCA. A fine afternoon and I go for a little ramble on my own and try unsuccessfully to get in to a YMCA concert in the evening.

**Sunday 23rd September.** A fine sunny day which reminds me of the happy autumn days of a year ago when I was with the boys at Lark Hill Salisbury Plains. I go for a walk with Paddy Byrne in the afternoon and we go over to Fovant. In the evening we go to one of Albany Ward’s shows.

**Monday 24th September.** A rather eventful day for I receive a cable from Dan McNamara asking if I am prepared to contest Dundas at the coming State elections.

Before going overseas, Bill had signed a nomination paper to stand as a candidate for the Mildura-Swan Hill electorate. These “left behind” nominations were invalidated by
Tuesday 25th September. I parade for and get two days special leave with liberty to wire for an extension. Catch the 12.05 train to London. Had no money so had to borrow seven shillings and sixpence [now $20] from Paddy Byrne. I send an affirmative reply to cable stating preparedness to contest Dundas. See Percy Evans and have a chat over things. Some excitement in London in the evening as another air raid takes place. I go out to Holland Park and stay with the Toomers.

Wednesday 26th September. I have a fairly busy morning and go with Percy Evans up to the High Commissioner’s office. I get an idea of affaires politique in Aussy and particularly at Dundas. I get to a matinée and see Beech’s company produce Madam Butterfly. In the evening I see Oscar Ashe in the famous oriental fantasy Chu Chin Chow. Again staying with the Toomers.

Thursday 27th September. I have good luck in striking Roy Wallace and get busy on his case [for returning to Australia]. George unfortunately I have missed. He went up to Scotland. We go and see Colonel Buckley over Roy’s case which the Colonel thinks is good. I go with Gus Hart to a revue Smile but it is rather weak. Stay at the AIF War Chest Club. I appreciate the great work of the Anzac Buffet.

Friday 28th September. Necessary extension of leave granted so I’m still up in the Big Smoke. Still pottering about and I do a little sightseeing. Visit Temple Bar and see the famous dining hall. Pay visit also to the Old Bailey and saw the courts where all the famous trials have been held. What a famous place. See Gus Hart again and strangely meet Jack Parsons and Bob Gillett.

Saturday 29th September. Another beautiful morning. I see Roy Wallace and the Laurence boys and introduce them to Mr Evans who is still interesting himself in them. I have only a few more hours left so, with the boys, go for a few bus rides and then return to the Anzac Buffet for lunch. I catch my train from Waterloo at 1 o’clock and get back again to Hurdcott at 4.

Sunday 30th September. Another glorious day and I return to my job as mess orderly. With a pal I go out taking photos in the afternoon. We climb to the summit of the hill where the large map of Australia has been outlined. Would that we were on the real “Australis terra firma”. A

Parliament, but a later amendment enabled him to be nominated for the electorate of Dundas in the Western district of Victoria.

50 The War Chest was a club in Horseferry Road, maintained by gifts from Australia.
great Aussy mail is waiting for me at last.

**Monday 1st October.** Another fine day and I am carrying on as usual. I get a welcome telegram from George Wallace telling me that he is coming down to see me. I meet him at 4 o’clock and we have a great happy reunion. He looks well and returns to France tomorrow. We have tea in a little farmhouse and talk over old days and happy times. How happy, let us hope, our next reunion is.

**Tuesday 2nd October.** I go for classification again and see one of the Majors who makes me A3. So now it won’t be long before I get to France. I am likely to go on draft any day. Another quiet day with nothing doing at all.

**Wednesday 3rd October.** Still hanging on here but don’t know for how long. I am trying to catch up with my mail, for I owe a great number of letters. I apply for some pay and, although I have over 10 pounds [$600] on my book, I’m told I can’t draw anything until 14 days have elapsed since my last pay was drawn. Oh what a life this army life is??

**Thursday 4th October.** A wild boisterous day with chill winds that betoken the coming of autumn. I receive a letter from Frank Shaw and he says the boys are still out and are having a good time. Harold Laurence has gone to Parkhouse so I will probably see him over there.

**Friday 5th October.** Still hanging on in this convalescent camp which, though cold and in some senses cheerless, is much better than France. I cannot help noting the fact that the Australian troops have been in every offensive this year with the exception alone of the Arras and Lens battles. It is giving a lot of us considerable food for thought.

**Saturday 6th October.** Not a bad day and I have a visit from Mr Smith who comes up from Yeovil to see me. He can only stay a few hours but I manage to take him out to our camp and show him around. We have a great talk over a variety of topics and many allusions are made to him who has gone - best and whitest of pals - Bill [Smith, his son].

**Sunday 7th October.** A wild, wet wintry day - God what must it be like in Flanders. I can picture the unspeakable awfulness of it and so many of my dear old pals in it. I stay indoors all day but go down to the YMCA to do a little writing at night. Great surprise seeing Sgt Jim

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51 Australian troops were put into the front lines in many of the fiercest battles on the Western Front in 1917-18. One can speculate whether this was because they were thought to be the best fighters, or the most expendable.
Hodder there. We have a good old yarn. He has only come in today and is at present B1A1.

**Monday 8**\(^{th}\) **October.** I start on a new job as ambulance orderly and have to go with a horse wagon round to the different training quarters. I take the sick men along to Fovant hospital. It is not a bad job and will do me for a while. I get back rather late for dinner but that will be remedied.

**Tuesday 9**\(^{th}\) **October.** Again on my job and it is a little different from being a car orderly over in France. The weather is very bad, so the conditions in Flanders must be beyond description. Still the jingoes cry “we must crush Prussian militarism”, and so the fratricide continues.

**Wednesday 10**\(^{th}\) **October.** A better arrangement is made and I get a very good dinner at the Observation Hospital. I strike a fine pal named Dick Cole. He is from Adelaide and is a great radical. We often go for a long walk and discuss the deep problems of humanity. Quite refreshing to meet a pal with views and ideals in common.

**Thursday 11**\(^{th}\) **October.** Wretched weather continues. I see Jim Hodder wearing his gold stripe\(^{52}\). I’m still doing my daily trip to Fovant hospital. I’m doing quite a lot of writing these days and am awaiting another Aussy mail. We miss the papers very much for they all go over to France.

**Friday 12**\(^{th}\) **October.** Still carrying on as ambulance orderly. These days are quiet and uneventful here but I am not complaining. I know my lease here is a very precarious one but still why worry over the future? I hear that poor old Jim Hamilton has been killed and Les Midgley wounded.

**Saturday 13**\(^{th}\) **October.** Nothing very exciting to report and I’m still without news of the boys over in France. I am still taking patients to the Fovant hospital and I am still without news of the political situation in Victoria. I see Alex Sterne before he goes across to France again and also Vic Noble. Quite a Mildura re-union.

\(^{52}\) Indicated a soldier was wounded; each brass “gold” stripe represented a wound received.
Sunday 14th October. Another miserable day spent as usual. Still the food could be worse and it is a comfort to sleep, even on the floor, without the fear of interruptions. It seems as if a new war policy is developing, centring round the restitution of Alsace-Lorraine53.

Monday 15th October. Weather wet and cheerless. I’m doing a bit of reading these days and am on Morris’s *News from Nowhere - a Utopian Sketch* (meaning England, of course). I go to the Albany Ward’s Picture and Vaudeville show but it is not up to much.

Tuesday 16th October. A fine, bright day for a change and it makes one’s blood run more freely. Still without news of the boys across there in Flanders so I guess they are still in.

Wednesday 17th October. Sports were to have been held here today but it has poured all day, so they were postponed.

Thursday 18th October. The weather breaks so the sports are to take place. I had a run in a couple of events but have no hope. It is a break in the monotony of the life. I would like a little more recreation than I actually get. Some football would be good. Attend a concert at the hall and it’s passable.

Friday 19th October. Another fine day and I get afternoon leave so go down to Yeovil - 40 miles away - to see Mr Smith and do a little Christmas shopping. I am shown through one of the glove factories and see how the skins are primarily treated. Also see aeroplane body construction work in which Mr Smith is employed, and it is very interesting. Yeovil’s a rather pretty Somerset town. I happen to see it on market day.

Saturday 20th October. Wilton revisited! Dick Cole and I walk into Wilton and I recall how our unit was the first lot of Aussies to go through the town in September or October last year. What a memorable day it was then to be sure. I show Dick round the town, the Church and the grounds of the Earl of Pembroke and don’t we have some nice things to say about privilege and the aristocracy!

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53 Alsace-Lorraine is the border region between France and Germany. It had been part of Germany since the Franco-German War in 1871.
**Sunday 21st October.** An easy day for I have no patients to take to Fovant. Ern O’Connor and I go for a long walk and see the old Roman road and camping ground, the ramparts of which exist in a very good state of preservation. We go to the pictures in the night and the show is rotten. No more of them for me - it’s a waste of good time and money.

**Monday 22nd October.** Still no letters from home but have received a rather important letter from Harry Burgess who is now a Lieutenant. Ern and I go to a concert at the camp hall and it is fairly good. A big Zeppelin raid on London fails because of the bad weather and four of the monsters are brought down in France.

**Tuesday 23rd October.** Autumn tints are deepening on the surrounding trees and the wind is getting very chilly. Where am I to spend the winter - here or in France again? I see in the casualty lists two more pals from my section have been wounded, namely Charlie Bond and H. McAlister; both old boys of hut 26 fame.

**Wednesday 24th October.** Still nothing doing of importance. Parliament is meeting again and the Irish question is being debated. Sinn Feinism is sweeping through the Emerald Isle and is causing some deep thinking by the so-called leaders of the State.

**Thursday 25th October.** I change with one of the boys and do the Brilford trip. It rains heavily and, as I failed to take my coat, I get caught in it. I pass through Amesbury again and on my return from Brilford stay and see Mr and Mrs Sampson. They tell me that George Sadleir was over on leave a week ago. It reminded me of the happy evenings and great hospitality that these people showed us a year ago.

**Friday 26th October.** A rather sad day for I see by the casualty list that George Allen and Alf Harris, two of my section pals, have been killed in the battle of Broodseinde on October 4th. George was with me in the dugout when Len and Vic were killed - now the poor chap has gone. I have a letter from Howard Iredale and he tells me that he saw in the Daily Mail that I was a candidate for Dundas.

**Saturday 27th October.** Six weeks I have been here and am still going strong. Our depot has formed a football club and I am given a game against the 8th TB. We have a fairly good side and win fairly easily. A

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54 The films of the time were silent melodramas with accompanying music.
55 These rigid Airships, first flown in 1900, were used in the war by Germany for long range bombing attacks.
cheery letter from Les Midgley tells me that he hasn’t been wounded badly. George Risbey and Pascoe Beverley have both been wounded - also Harry Betts.

**Sunday 28th October.** Another casualty list shows that three more of the 10th Field Ambulance have gone “West”; George McIntyre, Len Mudie and Jim Phillips. Three of the stalwarts of B section - the first two boys were military medallists. Stan Shilliday and Len Trengrove have also been wounded. Later on I see that Lance Smith and Tom Rawlings (of the 38th) have been killed. Hell - what casualties the Aussies have maintained.

**Monday 29th October.** I’m on another new job. Jim Hodder is in charge of a new classification depot and he gets me there as a clerk. I don’t think it will last though, for all A3 AMC men are urgently wanted. Still I take up my duties and push the pen with vigour all day. I have a happy reunion with Les Park, who has just come up from Weymouth. He was slightly wounded in the big stunt.

**Tuesday 30th October.** We have plenty of work to do in our new job so three more clerks are helping me. I’ve put in for seven days special leave but don’t know how I’ll get on. Am still without letters from Aussie. Les Park and I spend the evening at the YMCA hut. Another of the 10th Field Ambulance has been killed - Len Groat, an MM and a good fellow too.

**Wednesday 31st October.** I see Jim Steele - an old Irymple [Mildura] pal. He too came out of the big stunt lightly. The Australian casualties [killed and wounded] are said to have totalled 50,000. It is fearful beyond all words. Les Park and I spend the evening together at the YMCA. Italy’s crushing blow and Russia’s complete defection are prolonging influences in this fratricidal struggle.

**Thursday 1st November.** The ADMS [Assistant Director of Medical Services] has ordered all A3 AMC men to go on to the depot, so my days at Hurdcott are numbered alright. I arranged with Sergeant Major Barber and Ern O’Connor to meet them in Dublin next Wednesday if I get my leave. I attend a debate at the YMCA and we have a good evening - quite like old times - discussing the wide problems that beset

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56 James Stuart Steele, later to be Bill’s brother-in-law, first saw action in France in 1915 and fought in the battles of the Somme and Messines.

57 Italy’s crushing blow was a major battlefield loss to the Germans. Russia’s defection was their withdrawal from the war.
the world today.

**Friday 2nd November.** Wet miserable misty weather continues and I am transferred from Staff Company to No.8 Company, so I finish up my clerical duties with Jim Hodder for the time being. There is talk of my going away on draft next week. I am sick of this wasteful and unnatural life. Everything tends to add to the sickness of the whole business.

**Saturday 3rd November.** I go over to No.8 company and return to drill, route marches and jerks. In a way it isn’t bad. The food leaves very much to be desired. An order declaring general mobilisation is issued and it vetoes all leave. I fare very badly as I had been granted leave for tomorrow as well as seven days’ special leave dating from Tuesday next.

**Sunday 4th November.** It turns out a nice day. I return to staff company and succeed in spending the day very leisurely. George Stewart and I go for a long walk in the afternoon right round through Dinton and Fovant villages. The leaves are falling very rapidly and winter is closing in on us. I manage to get my classification reduced from A3 to B1A4 as I am still dentally unfit.

**Monday 5th November.** I go round again to staff company and do a little clerical work. George Stewart and Harry Craddick are on draft and I would have been also had I been dentally fit. A varicose vein in my leg is beginning to play up, but I am averse to having another operation.

**Tuesday 6th November.** No.4 Command come here from Codford and I see Reg Whitefield, Alan Perry and Stan Ward - three boys of the 10th. Also see Capt McWilliams and Fred Hebbard, two Mildurians. I have returned to the fold and am doing as little as possible. In the evening about six of us go to a concert at the hall but it is very, very weak.

**Wednesday 7th November.** Alas for the arrangements that we made - I was to have been in Dublin today meeting Ern O’Connor. However I hear that the embargo has been lifted, so am arranging for my leave for next week. I am wondering what will happen to Ern and Sergeant Major Barber for not coming back in response to the mobilisation order. Tomorrow will tell.

**Thursday 8th November.** I see Capt McWilliams. Les Park and I go across to his quarters and spend about two hours with him talking chiefly Mildura all the time. War aims are discussed in the Commons but the pacifist motion (really it wasn’t such) was badly defeated. It seems that we are still to be kept in the dark in regard to our real war
aims. We read in the cables that another conscription referendum is going to take place in Australia.

**Friday 9th November.** Weather still wet and miserable. I’m getting my leave alright I believe. I’m still engaged at the classification hut on clerical work. Mark Freeman and I go to one of Albany Ward’s shows and it was rotten. Just as well that for us it was backsheesh*.

**Saturday 10th November.** The depot command plays the 6th TB football and I have a game. It was a good close match and we won by nine points. The papers tell us that the conscription referendum is to take place on the 22nd December. Note the subtlety of the pro-conscriptionists. They fix a date that doesn’t allow of the soldiers writing home and indicating their intense disfavour of conscription.

**Sunday 11th November.** I spend quite an interesting afternoon with Les Park, Fred Hebbard and Fred Benson and we all go for a walk to Fovant. What a Mildura gathering it was. On the war we all seem to agree that fighting will never end the struggle.

**Monday 12th November.** My leave has been granted alright so I get busy to go away tomorrow. I hear from Mr Smith that there is a big mail for me up at Walthamstow. I see Les Park again and have a chat over things in general.

**Tuesday 13th November.** I go on leave but we are about three hours fixing things up. Catch the 11.55am train up to London town. Great welcome surprise on seeing Miss Jones and Daisy Hamilton, who are going back to Mildura via Canada on Saturday. We spend a few hours in fixing up passports and have a unique photo taken of the three of us in uniform. Daisy goes up to Edinburgh by the 10.30.

**Wednesday 14th November.** Weather dry but cloudy. I meet Miss Jones again and we go for a walk through Hyde Park before lunch. In the afternoon we meet Sister Gallagher from Mildura who is at Dartford. She tells me about Gus Pegler and Allan Perry - the latter having been boarded and marked B2B1. What a talk we have about Mildura and I hear that Bill Cox was well. In the evening we went to a comic opera *Carmenetta* and it wasn’t too bad.

**Thursday 15th November.** A fairly busy day in going round with Percy Evans. I go to HQ and can get a good job there in the estates branch if I can get released by the ADMS [Assistant Director of Medical Services]. See Gus Hart and have a good yarn. In the afternoon I go out to Walthamstow and get a great pile of letters - 62 in all. What delights in
store for me. Leave for Glasgow by the 11.30pm train.

**Friday 16th November.** State elections in Victoria today and I’m wondering whether I am a candidate and how things are going. I arrive in Glasgow at 9.30 after an uneventful trip up. Strange experience in meeting Dug Rogers who came up in the same train. I go straight out to see Frank Shaw’s friends at Pollokshields. They are very good to me and Miss Walker takes me for a drive round the City. We see the municipal buildings, the cathedral, City Square, Picture Gallery and the main streets. In the evening I take Dug Rogers and his pal out to Miss Walker’s for dinner.

**Saturday 17th November.** Weather holding good but very windy up here in “Glasgee”. I look round the City with Dug and we have a photo taken. We go out to Ronken Glen in the afternoon and quite enjoy the train ride. The service is quite the best that I know of. We see *Smile* - a revue at the Colosseum in the evening.

**Sunday 18th November.** Windy weather again but Dug, Percy and I go down to Loch Lomond which we reach by train - a ride of nearly 15 miles. We go through Dumbarton and Balloch and have a splendid trip. I see Gus Pegler down at the Loch. Isn’t the world a wee place? Balloch must be very popular as there were many people there, including Australian soldiers in large numbers.

**Monday 19th November.** I’m up early as Dug and I move off to Edinburgh by the 9.15 train. We put in an excellent day’s sightseeing. First the Edinburgh castle then down famous High Street, through St Giles, Parliament Square and the Advocates’ Hall, John Knox’s house and Canongate tollbooth. Have a great lunch, after which we see Holyrood Castle and the famous Princes Street. It was my second visit to this wonderful and famous Scotch city.

**Tuesday 20th November.** Left Edinburgh at 10 o’clock last night and arrived at King’s Cross at 7.30 to the tick. Have a fairly busy morning at Horseferry Rd and see Alan Perry there. He comes round with me and we do a little shopping and finally have lunch together. I catch the 1 o’clock train back to Dinton and at 4 o’clock I am back at Hurdcott.

**Wednesday 21st November.** The old routine of camp life again after another copious draught of the elixir of life - freedom. I resume clerical work in the classification hut. I open a great parcel sent to me by Alice Vines. It is excellent and the boys in my hut do justice to the good things. Her many kindnesses I can never repay nor am I ever likely to
Thursday 22\textsuperscript{nd} November. A fine, warm genial day, a rarity all the more appreciated. Reminds me of Mildura and those charming winter days. I see an old pal in Jim Basham. Great discussion in the Commons over the deprivation of the franchise to conscientious objectors\textsuperscript{58}. Stirring speech by Lord Cecil on the supreme law - moral versus state. Striking philosophical statements that afford keen food for thought.

Friday 23\textsuperscript{rd} November. A year ago we left old Lark Hill for France. Ah what the year has seen. I receive quite a lot more Aussie letters, so have an enormous amount of writing to do. The news of the strike in Australia\textsuperscript{59} has reached me and my sympathies are with the men. We must never relinquish the strike weapon, war or no war. To its potency we owe everything - take it away and we are at the mercy of the bosses.

Saturday 24\textsuperscript{th} November. A fairly easy day, so I do a fair amount of writing. I become the most puzzled man in the world by the receipt of a letter from Percy Evans telling me that I have been elected for Dundas. However I am sceptical for I’ve had no word about it, not even any news confirming my candidature. A few days time however will bring me news one way or the other.

Sunday 25\textsuperscript{th} November. I’ve been in this camp ten weeks now, so have had a good spin. With Fred Benson I go for a walk in the afternoon up to Fovant hospital and see two of my unit chums who are there - Roy Rule and Harry McKinley. They are both doing well and expect to be out shortly. Fred and I discuss war aims and agree that there seems to be a want of definiteness in our war aims or purposes.

Monday 26\textsuperscript{th} November. No further word about the elections but one of the boys in the hut shows me a copy of the British-Australian of the 23\textsuperscript{rd} of November and it states that I have been successful. However, I’m still sceptical. Things are still quiet in this camp and I am on dental parade again.

Tuesday 27\textsuperscript{th} November. Weather on the mild side and things generally are the same. I’ve been thinking quite a lot of what political success will mean. It will throw tremendous responsibilities on my shoulders and I can see days of hard and persistent study ahead. I’m

\textsuperscript{58} Conscientious objectors would have been denied the vote under this Bill.

\textsuperscript{59} Australian Unions generally were under siege during the war and in 1917 there were strikes in Transport, the docks, Electrical industries and others.
putting in every night in wild efforts to catch up with my correspondence.

**Wednesday 28th November.** I see two more of the 10th boys in this camp - Adams and Parkinson. Quite a host of us is gathering hereabouts now. Nothing startling happening and I still await election news from Victoria. Most of the boys in the depot are uncompromisingly hostile to conscription. We are going to vote on the question on the 10th of next month.

**Thursday 29th November.** Great surprise on seeing Harry Betts, one of my unit chums, come into the classification hut. He had a lucky escape having been wounded in the head. I take him up to see Reg Whitefield and the three of us meet again in the evening and have a long talk over our mutual experiences in France.

**Friday 30th November.** Harry Betts, Reg Whitefield and I go to one of Albany Ward’s shows and have quite a “sporty” evening. When I return to my hut in the evening, I find a telegram for me from Harry Smith telling me that he has two cables from Aussie stating that I’ve been elected for Dundas. Rather a welcome surprise. Another surprise too on finding Gus Pegler in the same hut as I, while Les Park is next door. What a reunion we have - Gus and I talk for hours.

**Saturday 1st December.** A year ago today I went to the trenches for the first time. Today with Jim Hodder, Reg Whitefield and Len Strickland, I go for a walk into Wilton. We have a quiet stroll round this village, which for the boys of the 10th Field Ambulance holds very dear memories. Have tea (extortionate price of two shillings [$6] for a couple of eggs, tea and bread and butter) and then walk back to camp. The moon softly rising over the pines reminds me of Mildura and the old Murray.
Sunday 2\textsuperscript{nd} December. Official news reaches me by telegram from Sir Peter McBride\textsuperscript{60} that I’ve been elected MLA for Dundas\textsuperscript{61}. I also receive seven cables from: J. Cox, A. McDonnell, Dan McNamara and G. Neville, Peter McDonald and Father Ryan. All the boys here extend congratulations. I’m thinking of future movements but have decided nothing yet. Go for a walk with Gus Pegler and Les Park to the neighbouring village of Barford where we have afternoon tea.

Monday 3\textsuperscript{rd} December. Days of work are ahead now. I parade for seven days leave, which is granted. Also see Colonel Barwell who congratulates me and wants me to look him up when I get back. How patronising some people can sometimes become. I’m pretty busy writing. With Gus Pegler and Les Park I go over to see Capt McWilliams and we spend the evening with him. Come back to the hut and enjoy a plum pudding which A. Vines sent me.

Tuesday 4\textsuperscript{th} December. Gus Pegler leaves on draft for Sutton Veney but Les and I are still left here. Weather very cold but dry. Lord Lansdowne’s letter\textsuperscript{62} is the whole subject of comment these days. I see nothing very startling about it but the Jingos are wild. They have smelt and tasted blood alright - have these “never-endians”. Les Park and I have a night at the pictures.

Wednesday 5\textsuperscript{th} December. Weather bitterly cold with severe frosts. Am still busy writing but spend evening quietly with Les Park. Nothing very eventful happening. Most of the boys seem to be against conscription despite the propaganda work of the Hughes party.

Thursday 6\textsuperscript{th} December. Another severe frost. I have my teeth finished and am now A3. Get a surprise to learn that I have been put on draft. Quickly have this altered but waste the afternoon in doing so. Invite Reg Whitefield and Harry Betts to have supper with me to celebrate my political success. Our little supper takes place in the canteen.

Friday 7\textsuperscript{th} December. I start again on another seven days’ special leave in order to go to London to attend to Parliamentary duties. Arrive at

\textsuperscript{60} The Victorian agent general in London, McBride worked to help Australian servicemen.

\textsuperscript{61} Bill later related that some his colleagues in the 10\textsuperscript{th} turned against him because they heard he’d become an MP- and thought that he’d joined the hated Military Police!

\textsuperscript{62} On Nov. 29, 1917, the \textit{Daily Telegraph} published a controversial letter from British elder statesman Lord Lansdowne, suggesting negotiations on the basis of the pre-war status quo. Lloyd George rejected Lansdowne’s thesis on December 14.
London and see Percy Evans, Kingsmill and a few more staunch friends. Later on I see Gus Hart and have tea with him. He tells me that I have got a job in the Estates Department at Horseferry Rd and that I secured it prior to and independent of my political success. Go to a backsheesh show at the Alhambra in the evening.

**Saturday 8th December.** I stay with Gus Hart at his “digs”. I believe that Charlie McGrath MHR\(^{63}\) wants to see me with reference to the coming conscription vote, however I can’t get in touch with him. Gus and I attend the formal opening of the Australian YMCA at Aldwych theatre by Andy Fisher. Ada Crossley and Miss Stralia\(^{64}\) give vocal items. I have dinner with Gus and then go out to stay with Harry Smith at Walthamstow.

**Sunday 9th December.** Weather wet and miserable so I stay indoors all day with Harry. I get on to my old favourite volume of Fabian essays and read some illuminating passages from Mill, Morris and Shaw. Toots and Dor’s parcel is here for me and looks OK. A very fine scarf and pair of socks also to hand from Alice Vines. Frank Shaw, in a fine letter [from France], tells me that he has received four parcels for me, one each from mater*, Alice Vines, Mary Gordon and E.C. DeGaris on behalf of Mr Park.

**Monday 10th December.** Leave Walthamstow fairly early and get into the City. See Les Presnall (an old C section chum) and have a great yarn over things. He is going back to Aussy this month. Meet Charlie McGrath MHR and arrange preliminaries re scrutinising votes on conscription referendum. We also get busy on the distributing of circulars against the proposal. I have my vote at Horseferry Rd and needless to say vote an emphatic “No”.

**Tuesday 11th December.** Gus Hart won’t come up to Birmingham with me, so I go up on my own in order to hear Asquith speak on war aims. I get there at 1.30 and have a look round this second City of England. Great crowd there to hear Asquith, but I managed to get in the queue. Fair amount of excitement but I am disappointed, for this speech lacked that definiteness that I wanted to hear. Austen Chamberlain also spoke. I returned at 12.35.

**Wednesday 12th December.** Arrived back in London at 4am so, being

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\(^{63}\) David Charles McGrath was an ALP MHR when he enlisted in 1916. After serving in France, he had become ill and was stationed in London.

\(^{64}\) Elsa Stralia was a soprano whose many appearances raised money for the war effort.
dog tired, I got a bed in the YMCA at Euston and had a few hours’ sleep. Still, I wander round to Horseferry Rd and see Lieutenant Hudson who informs me that I’m pretty certain to get in the Estates Branch and that the authority of the DMS [Director of Medical Services] had been obtained last month. I’m glad that this position was obtained prior to and independent of my political success.

**Thursday 13**\(^{th}\) December. I see Les Presnall at the War Chest Club and we find that the boys from France are very hostile to conscription, the vote on which is still proceeding. Hughes’ pamphlets are cutting very little ice. In the afternoon Les and I see Bairnsfather’s *Bitter Ole*. It’s excellent and we do enjoy ourselves. Somehow we think of all the boys across there “somewhere” and hope and trust they’ll be free from danger.

**Friday 14**\(^{th}\) December. My leave expires so Charlie McGrath and I rush along to see Andy Fisher\(^{65}\). What a discussion the three of us have over war-aims and war means. Andy is a jingo now, as Charlie and I easily found. He has swallowed all the beliefs of the Northcliffe crew\(^{66}\). I see Les Presnall and catch the 1 o’clock train back to Hurdcott. Get back to camp and spend the evening with Les Park.

**Saturday 15**\(^{th}\) December. I get a surprise for the papers come through in connection with the referendum and I have to march out to Headquarters London. I have to take all my kit with me and get up to London at 3 o’clock. A lot of time is wasted at Headquarters. An Aussy munition maker takes me to Gatti’s for dinner and after dinner I go down to Gus Hart’s lodgings where I intend staying with him.

**Sunday 16**\(^{th}\) December. A wet cold miserable day so Gus and I sleep in until 12.30. I go round with Gus to dinner and in the afternoon we go to the Anzac buffet and the Catholic Soldiers’ hut where we have a game of billiards. In the evening we go to the soldiers’ backsheesh show at the Victoria. London is cold and grey, but yet warmer than Hurdcott and the plains.

**Monday 17**\(^{th}\) December. I see Les Presnall and Charlie McGrath and we go down to Euston. We have dinner at the Anzac Buffet and spend the afternoon round at Headquarters. Have tea together at the War Chest

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\(^{65}\) Andrew Fisher, three-time Australian Prime Minister between 1908 and 1915, had been the Australian High Commissioner in London since 1916.

\(^{66}\) Viscount Northcliffe owned the English tabloid newspapers *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror* with their “jingoistic” anti-German views.
then get a parcel of “smokes” to send to the boys over in France. We then go to a play *Brewster’s Millions* which is very amusing. What a great chat we have over those irrepressibles Dangles and Aus.

**Tuesday 18th December.** I go down to Waterloo to see Les Presnall off to Weymouth. Lucky beggar is going back to Aussies in a couple of days. We have a conference re the election arrangements. The count is to commence on Friday at 9am. Another air raid at 7 o’clock until 9 and bombs drop very close to us at Pimlico. The guns keep firing until well after 9 o’clock and much consternation is caused.

**Wednesday 19th December.** Have a rather busy day and go with Charlie McGrath to see Sir Peter McBride. Have about an hour with him and discuss things generally. Sir Peter isn’t a bad old stick, but there are some “duds” on the staff. I spend the evening at the Catholic recreation hut reading and writing. It has been fearfully cold (12 degrees of frost) and London has been enveloped in a choice fog.

**Thursday 20th December.** Still miserably cold and foggy. I see Frank Fletcher and Harry Betts, so go round with them a bit. Do a little writing at the War Chest club. Get a thundering surprise when they tell me at Horseferry Rd that my Lister Institute test has been returned positive and that I am a CSM\(^{67}\) carrier. It means my going off to Hospital tomorrow and not taking part in the scrutineering.

**Friday 21st December.** I see Charlie McGrath at 9am and tell him the position. There is no other course but for me to go to hospital. It’s bad luck but can’t be helped. I see Harry Smith and tell him that I have to cancel Christmas dinner with them. I’m taken out to the Holborn Military hospital in a sidecar and go straight into isolation. There are nine of us - six of whom are Aussies.

**Saturday 22nd December.** This hospital is at Mitcham - about nine miles out of the City - and I’m again in “Blues”*. Greatly elated to see that conscription looks like being defeated. I’m the only “anti” here out of six of us. We clean up the wards in the morning and are then free for the rest of the day. In the afternoon we all go for a “route march” and see a football match.

**Sunday 23rd December.** This has been an old Workhouse, so I ruminate over the memories of the place and of the social system that

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\(^{67}\) CSM (cerebro-spinal meningitis) attacks layers of membrane around the spinal cord and brain; it was common amongst troops in the trenches.
makes these places the last sad haven and refuge of worn-out humanity. Holborn Union - that is its name and I, by the vagaries of this military life, am an inmate. I stay in during the afternoon and do a little reading.

**Monday 24th December.** Christmas eve and nothing of great or untoward excitement has taken place. I go in to the Anzac Buffet in the afternoon and spend an enjoyable half-hour in this real Aussie “home”. We have a few games of bridge in the evening and spend an hour after lights out at 8 o’clock round the fire in the ward.

**Tuesday 25th December.** Christmas day in the workhouse! Sounds queer does it not? But it’s a reality. Our ward is well decorated and we have a good time. A nice Christmas dinner is partaken of - roast beef, parsnips, baked potatoes and plum pudding. In the afternoon we go to the Anzac Buffet where the arrangements for entertaining us have been capital. We enjoy a splendid hour there. Home again - we have a good tea and then play bridge.

**Wednesday 26th December.** This day a year ago Len and Frank Shaw and Sid Vickery and I were down at Little Mary aid post. It’s a different day today now that I’m away from the war zone. We go into the Anzac Buffet in the afternoon and spend a quiet ¾ hour there. Great discussion in the evening between Cumming and I over labour and economic questions. Most of the English boys here look eagerly to the changes in the social system of their country.

**Thursday 27th December.** A rather quiet and uneventful day and I stay in all the time reading and writing. It’s cold out of doors but comfortable enough in our ward and we have a good fire going all day. The Captain from the RAMC comes and swabs all our throats, so upon the results will depend the length of our stay here. I’m not in too violent a hurry to leave anyhow.

**Friday 28th December.** All the boys go out on the route march but I stay in and enjoy myself reading by the fire. More bridge at night and we have some interesting rubbers. The Labor Party’s memoranda on war-aims has been approved by the entire party and forms the most statesman-like document of the war.

**Saturday 29th December.** Alas our happy home is being broken up and four of the boys are going out. Our number is only six now of whom four are Aussies. I go in and see Gus Hart in the afternoon and we go round to the Anzac Buffet and exchange Christmas experiences. It seems very quiet with the other boys away and we miss our games of
bridge.

**Sunday 30th December.** I miss the usual little Church service and do a little writing instead. The day is a cold and miserable one so we all stay indoors. Still no mail from Aussy. Rumours are persistent that the mails have been lost.

**Monday 31st December.** The year dies in discord and tumult and I’m still in the “workus”. I opened the year in the trenches and I finish it in hospital. It’s been an eventful year alright and I have in the foregoing pages a fair chronicle of it. We have a bit of fun at midnight by running round the ward in our shirts, heralding the New Year.

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**January 1918**

**Tuesday 1st January.** And so the year opens with the world war at its height and I for the moment out of its mad war surge. I’m in hospital at Mitcham, London being a “CSM” carrier. Will the pages of this little book see the dawn of an era of Peace and Sanity? I wonder! The present indications are anything but favourable, although the current of war weariness is an ever-broadening one.

**Wednesday 2nd January.** I’ve been reading the Christmas copy of the *Herald* (a Labor paper) and it’s one of the most interesting numbers that I’ve ever seen. Would that its contents had a wider audience. The fatuity of this world-fratricide might then be seen. Weather still cold but dry and I go in the afternoon to the Anzac Buffet.

**Thursday 3rd January.** Captain Glover (RAMC) comes down from the Lister Institute and takes some swabs. We are all anxiously waiting for the results, as upon them depends our getting out of hospital. A couple of English fellow patients we have almost persuaded to come out to Aussy after the war, so we’re doing good work as emigration agents!

**Friday 4th January.** Weather cold and dry, but letters from France indicate that there is much snow there. I go into London in the afternoon and get some good books at the *Herald* office, namely, Lansbury’s *Your share in Poverty*, Outhwaite’s *Land or Revolution*, and Brailsford’s *League of Nations*. I am after some good works on reconstruction.

**Saturday 5th January.** Still nothing exciting happening here in hospital. No results from our swabs, so we’re staying on. A pal and I go
into the City in the afternoon. Food queues (the longest we have ever seen) are still in evidence. It is nothing short of scandalous how food profiteering and mal-distribution goes on and upon the poor and needy are heaped all the humiliations and indignities.

**Sunday 6th January.** Today has been set apart as a day for National intercession - a Universal praying for Peace - and yet in practically the same voice the nation is urged to prosecute the war with unfailing vigour. Truly we are a remarkable people. I go into the City and see our old pal Corporal O’Connor. He comes out to the hospital with me and sees all the boys again.

**Monday 7th January.** Lloyd George has made a remarkable speech before the Labor conference. Its terms greatly modify any previous utterance. They accept the formulae: no annexations, no indemnities and the principle of national self-determination. Still I don’t trust the wily gentleman too much, but his speech has made a big impression.

**Tuesday 8th January.** Very cold weather and first heavy fall of snow for the winter. Bright sunshiny afternoon and I am reminded of similar days a year ago in France. I go into the buffet again, after first having seen Harry Smith to get some letters from him.

**Wednesday 9th January.** Still cold out of doors. We have another swab so I am hopeful of getting out at the end of the week. I see Charlie McGrath and he tells me that the boys in France voted strongly against conscription but the vote in England and Egypt counter-balanced it. The final result was an affirmative majority of but 71. The spirit of compulsion so far as Australia is concerned is futile.

**Thursday 10th January.** Another great change here in our home and we lose four of the veterans - Steve, Bob, Bill Harper and Jeffrey get out. Steve is a fine Englishman who is extremely desirous of emigrating to Aussy. Bob was our mandolin player and we’ll miss him and the others very much. Joe Peisley and I are eager to get out now.

**Friday 11th January.** A welcome Australian mail comes in at last with letters up to 25/10/17. They make interesting reading now for there was at the date they were written “just the possibility” of my being a candidate at the elections. It’s very quiet here in the “workus” but we continue on afternoon walks.

**Saturday 12th January.** Still here in hospital with life following its slow unchanging routine. I go for a long walk in the afternoon and go as
far as Clapham Common and back. The long food queues continue and are distressing. Surely a sane system of distribution of food would prevent this difficulty.

**Sunday 13th January.** Another fair day with nothing of excitement happening. Bill Tiller (38th Battalion) and I go for a long Sunday afternoon ramble and get as far as Wimbledon - famous for its tennis. I meet Steve and his brother-in-law and they ask for particulars re going out to Aussie.

**Monday 14th January.** I see Mr Cherry and have a chat over politics. I get a little inside knowledge into the workings of the meat trust and its world-wide functions. Power of wealthy corporations to buy labour leaders was also indicated. His information gave me much food for thought.

**Tuesday 15th January.** Welcome surprise on seeing my old pal Alec Hoggart down at the Anzac Buffet. He is marked C111 so is shortly going to Aussie. What a great chat we have. Alec is the goods alright and I’d like to see him rise in the Labor movement. He has the ability and the deep enthusiasm if ever a fellow had.

**Wednesday 16th January.** Captain Glover again swabs us and tells me that I will probably be getting out this week. Very fine officer this - quite different from the usual Tommy medico. I enquire at the Commonwealth Bank and find that my cable came on the 7th of December. The fools had it down to the credit of “Sliter”. I collect the money and pay Mr Cherry the five pounds [$300] borrowed from Les Park’s account.

**Thursday 17th January.** After 17 months I see Frank Smith (Bill’s youngest brother). What a change for the better, from a physical point of view, army life has made to him. We go and have afternoon tea at Lyon’s. I am hopeful of getting out of hospital tomorrow. Joe Peisley has left today.

**Friday 18th January.** I go to the exhibition of Will Dyson’s war drawings. They are really the best I’ve seen. No one can criticise the expressions of his characters unless they’ve seen the “real thing”. Disillusionment and not despair is very strongly expressed on the many faces of our boys over there in the big scrap.

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1 William Henry Dyson, political cartoonist, was commissioned as the first Australian
Saturday 19th January. I receive a cable from P.T. Park expressing anxiety because of my not having cabled since elections. Circumstances of course have prevented me from doing so, but I go into the cable office in the afternoon. I finally arrange to see the State Agent-General [Sir Peter McBride] on Monday if I can get leave to do so.

Sunday 20th January. Weather a little milder and Bill Tiller and I go for an afternoon stroll round Streatham. Our limited time only allows of short walks close at hand. There are indications in the House [of Parliament] and Country that everyone is dissatisfied with the military machine and changes may come in the higher command.

Monday 21st January. Capt Glover comes again but tells me I am alright and am to be discharged. I obtain a special pass and go to town in order to see Sir P. McBride with reference to sending off a couple of cables. I send them off; one to Dan McNamara and the other to P.T. Park. Spend a few hours with Alec Hoggart and hand him letters to take back to George Elmslie and J.F. Hannan. We see Ken Campbell and have tea together.

Tuesday 22nd January. My last day in the old Workhouse for I get my “ticket” after dinner and subsequently report at Horseferry Rd. Here arrangements are made for my going on to A Records Legal Department and I’m to take up my duties tomorrow morning. I go up to the Aldwych theatre in the evening and write letters.

Wednesday 23rd January. Start in another place of my varied military life, for I go on to Headquarters in the legal department. Great and welcome surprise on meeting Frank Shaw who is just over on leave from France. We meet Bert Reid and Frank Hartigan at the War Chest club and then go out to Lewisham and spend the evening with Frank’s uncle. What a talk we have over old times and doings.

Thursday 24th January. Again up at Headquarters on my second day’s work. It isn’t too bad and I’m settling down to it alright. I meet Bert Reid and Frank Hartigan and also Jim Caffrey. See Frank again in the evening and we have tea at the Aldwych theatre and then go to a play - *Within the Lines* - a light war drama. We finish up with supper at the Corner House on the Strand.

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2 P.T. (Percy) Park was Bill Slater’s employer in his Mildura law office.
Friday 25th January. Weather continues to be remarkably fine and dry and not too cold. I don’t see Frank so presume he has gone on to Scotland. Am still staying with Gus Hart and our room is not a bad one. Am free-lancing for meals. Spend the evening in “digs” reading and writing.

Saturday 26th January. Only a half day in the office today. I spend the afternoon writing and go round to the Anzac Buffet. In the evening a “corroboree” is held, for it is Australia day. Last Australia day I spent at a little shivoo* in France with Frank Shaw and Sid Vickery. Tonight’s function was essentially Australian and most enjoyable. Andy Fisher and John McCall both spoke³.

Sunday 27th January. Gus and I have a good sleep in and, the day being a fine sunny one, we go for a bus ride in the afternoon out to Golders Green, passing Lords Cricket Ground and St John’s Wood *en route*. I spend the evening quietly at home.

Monday 28th January. In to the office again for the start of another week’s work. I see Bill Tiller in the evening and we intend going up to the Aldwych theatre to do some writing, but Fritz comes over and we find ourselves in the air raid. Plenty of excitement and much noise and I understand a good deal of damage is done and loss of life sustained.

Tuesday 29th January. Last night’s air raid caused over 50 deaths and by one of the most ironical phases of the war, the printing and publishing office of Bottomley’s paper *John Bull*⁴ was destroyed, and a number of people sheltering in the basement killed. I spend the evening writing up at the Aldwych theatre. Towards midnight Fritz endeavours to come over again.

Wednesday 30th January. I am told to present myself before a medical board and strike the notorious General Charles Ryan. However I’m well contented with his classification, for he marks me C1. The result came rather as a surprise but an exceedingly welcome one for many and obvious reasons. I see Alec Stevens and have lunch with him. Still no mention of Frank Shaw so presume he’s up in Scotland.

Thursday 31st January. Frank Shaw comes back from Scotland and we have lunch together at the War Chest club. In view of my C1

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³ Dr John McCall was MO in charge of the Australian Auxiliary Hospital in London, and largely responsible for the Anzac Buffet.

⁴ A popularist patriotic weekly magazine famous for its jingoism and hatred of Germans.
classification, Charlie McGrath thinks I should make an application to return. I am considering the matter. Dirty, foggy weather returns and London is at its worst. Pay day today and I draw my usual pay plus subsistence allowances. Things are frightfully dear but I am trying hard to manage.

**Friday 1st February.** Bert Reid comes in to see me and tells me all about the pierrot troupe the boys in the unit are running. Noles Bodington is the great ragtime star. I see Frank again in the evening and we have tea at the Aldwych theatre YMCA. Afterwards we enjoy ourselves seeing Bairnsfather’s *Better Olé* and finish up with supper at the “Corner House”.

**Saturday 2nd February.** Frank Hartigan comes in today and we have a good yarn. Frank, Mr Lawson and I have an afternoon together. We have lunch at Gatti’s, then go to a matinée: *Seven Days Leave* at the Lyceum. Afterwards we have tea at Regent Palace and then go out to Lewisham for the evening. The Lawsons’ hospitality is indeed fine and Frank is enjoying his stay with them immensely.

**Sunday 3rd February.** Glorious Sunday for there is no getting up at 7.45. Gus and I stay in until 10.30, then go for a bath and later on have dinner at a YMCA. I’ve been landed for Sunday duties and have to work from 1pm until 6 in the casualty records rooms answering inquiries. I go out to Lewisham again in the evening and spend an enjoyable time with Frank and the Lawsons. We have a fine discussion on books and politics.

**Monday 4th February.** You get many surprises here in Headquarters. Les Midgley “blew in” today and what a re-union we had. It is nearly two years since I saw him and now he’s over on 14 days leave. We have lunch together at the YMCA and then have tea and spend the evening at the Aldwych YMCA theatre. What a talk over old times and pleasures. Les catches the 11.30 up to Scotland but intends spending a few days in London before he goes back to France.

**Tuesday 5th February.** Proportional representation is defeated again in the Commons, as is preferential voting. To me it looks as if the measure may yet be wrecked. If so, then the seeds of revolution will be sown wide and far. I see Frank and Len Phillips in the evening. Frank and I go to a picture show and wind up again with supper at the Strand Corner House. The prospect of his going back again to France is a rotten one.

**Wednesday 6th February.** Frank and Len stay one day over leave and
we have dinner together at the War Chest club. I go up to the City and see Dr Box with a view to ascertaining Charlie McGrath’s whereabouts. Strangely enough I meet Charlie at dinnertime and he urges me to apply for return to Aussie straight away. Frank and I have tea together at the YMCA, then he and Len come round to my “digs” where we spend a quiet evening together, finishing up with supper at the War Chest. I say *au revoir* to him. These are the poignant phases of the damn war.

**Thursday 7th February.** I see Arthur Holgate who has come over to arrange publication of *More Abaht It*. He tells me it is going to be a record number. I receive a cable from George Elmslie and he urges me to apply for leave to return to Aussie. So my application for return goes in tomorrow. I feel a little excited over the wonderful turn events have taken.

**Friday 8th February.** My application for return to Aussie goes in. Later in the day I see Charlie McGrath and he urges me to see Colonel Griffiths and request to be allowed to go home on the same boat as he [Charlie]⁶. I see Colonel Griffiths and he treats me with every possible courtesy and promises to expedite matters. My getting home now depends upon the result of a medical board, before which I’m to appear on Monday. I spend the evening at home quietly with Gus.

**Saturday 9th February.** A busy day to be sure. With Charlie McGrath I go up and see Mr Campion (Manager of the Commonwealth Bank) and I draw 10 pounds [$600] on P.T. Park. Meet Arthur Holgate at 1 o’clock and have lunch with him. Then with him go and see the Honourable and Mrs Graham Murray. We have two and a half hours’ interesting conversation with her. She is arranging for me to meet a number of Members of Parliament and we are to lunch with Ramsey McDonald one day. In the evening Arthur and I go to the Colosseum.

**Sunday 10th February.** I go out to Walthamstow early in the day and have a very enjoyable time with Harry Smith. I see Fred (who has now received his discharge) for the first time. Harry and I go out to the Chingford cemetery in the afternoon. It is a fine dry day and we enjoy the walk and talk very much. How we long that Bill [Smith] might have been spared. What a help he’d have been to us all these days.

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⁵ The 10th FA produced an annual publication “All Abaht It” - so called because of the London paperboy’s cry “Read all about it”. The publication had news about the men, poems, humorous items, etc.

⁶ McGrath had also been graded as being medically unfit to fight.
Monday 11th February. Commencing the most strenuous week of my life. I see Roy Duckett and Arthur Holgate at 11.30, then Charlie Ponder at 12, then lunch with Arthur and see Mrs Graham Murray at 1 o’clock. At 2 o’clock I appear before Lieutenant-Colonel Newmarsh and Major Wilcox and am marked C Aussie. So my army days are nearing the end. Arrangements are being made for me to return with Charlie McGrath on Thursday. I send cables to George Elmslie and Mater. Go out to St Johns Wood and spend the evening with Mr and Mrs Howard. Have some fine music.

Tuesday 12th February. What a program is in front of me! I see Charlie McGrath and we have invitations to the opening of Parliament. However we see Arthur Henderson instead and have a good chat. In the afternoon I go to the House of Commons and see a few of the members. Later on I hear the stirring debate between Asquith and Lloyd George. Deeply serious are the days just ahead. Sgt Holgate and I go out and see Lord Balfour of Burleigh and spend an hour with him and his daughter. We exchange views.

Wednesday 13th February. First trip I make is out to Lewisham, where I see Frank’s aunt and give her Frank’s present. Coming back I fail to see Sir P. McBride or Dr Cherry. Meet Percy Evans and Stan Kingsmill at 1 o’clock, and have an important conference over different topics. See J.M. Hogg at 2 o’clock at the House of Commons to discuss position of disabled soldiers. See Rumsey, secretary of RSA. All these men are great democrats. Try to meet Les Midgley but I miss his train. I say goodbye to the Toomers and return to Walthamstow at 12 o’clock. I have a thundering evening’s work and write and pack until 1 o’clock.

Thursday 14th February. My last morning in London! I leave Walthamstow at 7 o’clock and get to Belgravia and finish my packing up. Gus and I get a taxi and go to Horseferry Rd where I leave my three kit bags. I find that I’ve not been put on the boat roll but General Griffiths arranges that for me. I see Les Midgley and, with Gus and him, I go to the Anzac Buffet and say good-bye to Percy Evans. Back again at Horseferry Rd and then in a taxi with Gus and Les en route for Waterloo. We leave at 12.25 for Weymouth and arrive there at 5 o’clock. Charlie and I hear that we leave for Plymouth early in the morning.

Friday 15th February. Reveille at 5.30 and at 8 o’clock we leave Weymouth Westham camp for the train. Plymouth is reached at about 3. White old Plymouth - we landed here 19 months ago. Embarked at
about 4 o’clock on the Llanstephan Castle. She doesn’t look a bad old tub and has a reputation of being fairly new. We have some munition workers and a lot of women passengers for Capetown. The vessel remains at the quay all night. We hear we are to sail tomorrow.

**Saturday 16th February.** We are given boat stations and have each a lifebelt which has to be constantly worn. In the morning we move out into the harbour. Our escort consists of ten destroyers whilst the convoy is 11. At about 3 o’clock we move off and old England is left behind. I’m not sorry to be leaving for the call of Australia transcends everything else and my excitement at the prospect of getting back is increasing. The possibility of submarines doesn’t at all worry me.

**Sunday 17th February.** Fairly rough seas and I’m not feeling too well. I don’t swing my hammock but sleep on the floor. We only have two blankets and feel the cold. Charlie and I have a political chat and he tells me some of his early experiences. I can hardly realise that every day brings me a day nearer home. Oh! The joy of it.

**Monday 18th February.** Still feeling the effects of mal-de-mer so I’m not venturing down below for meals. Officers have 1st class, Sergeants 2nd class and we humble privates 3rd class fare and ours (as can be imagined) is fairly rough and ready. Things are easy on board and we are not worried with discipline, so we are all very contented and everyone seems happy. Still, some of the boys - blind and maimed - are not too cheerful on it.

**Tuesday 19th February.** I’ve given up staying down below and have taken up my quarters on the well-deck. My bed is hard and rough and my pillow is my life-belt, but I’m as happy as a sand-boy. Still not eating ship’s fare but am subsisting on tinned fruit and biscuits obtained from the canteen. Am beginning to settle down to some earnest reading.

**Wednesday 20th February.** Seas getting calmer and so am I, but I’m not venturing down below yet. Got a little braver and went down for tea. Have met three Mildura boys on board; Stan Kerridge, Bill Allen and Smith. So there are four of us from Currant-land. We receive a splendid kit issue from the Aussey Red Cross consisting of two suits of pyjamas, two flannel shirts, underpants, two towels, handkerchiefs, deck shoes, soap, etc.

**Thursday 21st February.** I hand nine pounds [$540] in to the office to be looked after by the purser. Weather cool and pleasant, seas fairly calm. We have a concert in the afternoon but it’s rather tame. I still
cannot take to the ship’s fare, but from what I hear it’s tolerably good.

**Friday 22nd February.** None of us on board seem to be worrying about submarines and we are getting very few drills. Mac [Charlie McGrath] and I are discussing future plans and he has promised to come with me on a tour through the Dundas electorate.

**Saturday 23rd February.** Still nothing of excitement to report. We’re ploughing our way down the broad Atlantic, with Blighty and the old war receding further and further away. Still off my meals, but have a splendid dinner with Mac in his cabin. How I enjoyed it.

**Sunday 24th February.** I miss Church parade and stay reading in Mac’s cabin. A mail closes today so I scribble off a few letters to France and Blighty pals. How I wish they were accompanying me back home. Weather good and the quiet uneventful days continue. My reading these days convinces me of the guilt of Capitalism and Imperialism for this war and its undue prolongation.

**Monday 25th February.** This day, or rather night, a twelve-month ago was the most terrible in my life and I cannot help recalling it. Poor old Len and Sid! Peace to their ashes out there in France. Best of pals and whitest of men, their loss is a heavy one.

Concert is held on board in the afternoon but I read as it’s fairly dull, or maybe I’m becoming dull and uninteresting.

**Tuesday 26th February.** The weather is warming up and we are just off the northwest coast of Africa. Most of the fellows are beginning to discard surplus clothing and shorts are the order of the day. Mac and I are having a great time together and he is giving me a lot of [political] hints that will be useful in the near future.

**Wednesday 27th February.** A haze causes low visibility and we don’t glimpse the African coast until after dinner. We reach Sierra Leone at about 2 o’clock and anchor in the harbour. Freetown is about two miles away and consists of scattered houses. The vegetation is tropical and, from our little experience of the place, we can quite believe that it is well described as the White Man’s grave.

**Thursday 28th February.** Still at anchor. None of the boys are allowed off but the officers are. Moreover, we are prohibited from purchasing fruit from the black vendors who come out in their canoes to our boat. Jet-black with curly hair, these Negroes are rather picturesque. Seeing the officers coming back laden with souvenirs rather jars us and creates
quite a lot of discontentment. However more of this anon.

**Friday 1st March.** Sierra Leone played a big part in the days of the slave trade, but all we see of it is the somewhat scattered town and the low surrounding red soil hills with their tropical flora. A pierrot troupe from the garrison comes aboard and gives us a concert in the evening. The weather is very humid and the boys won’t be sorry when the good ship gets going again.

**Saturday 2nd March.** Still at anchor, waiting we believe for an escort. Officers again go ashore as do the munition workers - but not we. The Colonel tells us that a war-office order precludes us from getting leave. Food is anything but satisfactory but First Class passengers and officers are having the time of their lives. More about this anon.

**Sunday 3rd March.** Sierra Leone’s harbour still claims us and the usual “furphies” go round as to when we leave. Weather dry and warm but a light breeze makes it fairly agreeable. I spend most of the time in reading and loafing about. Ernest study is out of the question, for the climate is too enervating.

**Monday 4th March.** Our escort comes in so we ought to be moving off shortly. The natives come out in their canoes for the waste food that is thrown overboard. Food is very poor indeed but Mac gives me a nice meal in his cabin. I sleep up on deck in my hammock but require very few blankets these nights.

**Tuesday 5th March.** Mac and I have about 30 games of euchre and I am well beaten, winning only about five games. We hear that the “heads” are arranging an Anzac Day program here at Sierra Leone so the barnacles will grow on our **Llanstephan Castle.** We are completely shut off from the world and are the world forgetting and by the world forgot.

**Wednesday 6th March.** At Sierra Leone still but I’m not worrying for there are plenty worse places, albeit there are many better. It’s imprisonment though to be here all this time and not be allowed ashore. Talking to a native who was helping in the coaling, he struck me by his intelligence. He complained of their subjection by the British but was hardly explicit. Still I don’t like the spirit of Imperialism at all.

**Thursday 7th March.** At last we leave Sierra Leone. Anchor is weighed at 3 o’clock and with the **Afric** escorting us and two other boats, we move off down South towards the Cape. Weather is good and seas are calm. I would like to have gone ashore but my turn will come when I
get my “civvy” clothes on. How I’ll hail and welcome freedom then.

**Friday 8th March.** We must be nearing the “line” [Equator]. No arrangements are made to celebrate the event. It’s a very dead boat alright and I think but little of the Commanding Officer of the troops. He seems most indifferent to the men’s interests and welfare and is entirely self-centred.

**Saturday 9th March.** Tropical rainfall last night but our little sleeping post above the aft well-deck is well protected. It’s great sleeping out of a night for the air is very thick and foetid down below. Food is getting worse and many complaints are heard. Still there’s only six more weeks to go.

**Sunday 10th March.** Journey still minus incident. I’m reading as usual and am appreciating the works I brought with me. Don’t go to Church service although I know the padre well. He is Kenneth Henderson and I knew his brother Rupert in Brayshay days. We often meet on board and discuss social problems.

**Monday 11th March.** Vic Spry (one of the munition workers) is on board - he used to go to school with me - and we have good old yarns. The munition workers have had anything but a good time in Blighty. These high wage stunts are in most cases mythical, whilst the cost of living, as I well know, is very high.

**Tuesday 12th March.** I have a day’s relaxation from reading, so play a few games of bridge - but the cards are very cruel to me. We are moving away from the tropics and the weather is cooling off. Seas however are still calm. I have a great argument with one of the munition workers on labour and capital.

**Wednesday 13th March.** Still ploughing down the Atlantic with our escort alongside and the two other convoyed vessels at our rear. The boys spend the days in various ways - card-playing, reading and fancy-work are most popular. Gambling is on the wane, so the money must be centring in narrow channels.

**Thursday 14th March.** Weather still good, food still bad. God help the boys coming back on transports after the war unless we can succeed in having things materially altered. This morning’s stew was very bad and we took it to the chief steward but our protests were ineffectual.
**Friday 15th March.** Monotonous routine maintained. I am reading quite a lot and have perused some good stuff. Paul’s *The State* excellently reviews the class struggle down through history, analysing its aggravated nature today. How can our ideals be the more speedily attained - evolutionarily or revolutionarily?

**Saturday 16th March.** There is a boxing contest on but Mac and I are not interested and, the decks being clear, we have a long walk and talk. Some of the books we are reading afford an insight into some of the hidden causes of the war. Behind it all is the sinister evil of secret diplomacy and treaty. How can we honestly claim that it’s Democracy’s war?

**Sunday 17th March.** St Pat’s day and here and there a green spray is seen. One thing army life has done is to subdue the rancour of sectarianism. To us of the radical movement it means everything - divide and rule has been the policy of the opponents of the labour movement and they have well carried it out.

**Monday 18th March.** A fine day with our vessel not far from the Cape. We are looking forward to getting onto land again. Mac and I are still reading and discussing matters of great importance.

**Tuesday 19th March.** Land in sight at last and the high range of mountains loom in to view. We get to Capetown at noon. It’s a glorious day, typically Australian. We get leave at about 4 o’clock and Mac and I go straight to the cable office. We then have some fine afternoon tea and follow it up by a train ride to Seapoint. Have dinner at the Opera House restaurant and then have a walk round the town, returning to the ship at 10 o’clock.

**Wednesday 20th March.** Another glorious day. Some of the returning Aussies have been kept here for two weeks. They embark today on the *Osterley*. We get leave after lunch and do a little shopping. I see in the daily papers that a dissolution may take place in the Victorian Parliament, so arrange to send Elmslie a cable. We go up to Parliament House and see the four Labor members. They give us a good time. Afterwards we meet Senator Ware - he has just returned from Australia. We go out to dinner with him.

**Thursday 21st March.** We get leave at about 10am and Mac and I go

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7 “The State, its origin and Function” by William Paul.
on the beautiful Camps Bay trip. It is a glorious day and the trip was charming. We get back at 1 o’clock and have lunch at Parliament House with Senator Ware. Afterwards we hear debates in the Senate and Assembly - some of the speakers speak in Dutch. We go out with Senator Ware to dinner and spend a homely evening with him. We go to a fine orchestral concert in the Town Hall.

**Friday 22nd March.** Weather still glorious, for it is late summer here. Again I have leave from about 11 o’clock and get up to the City. Have a cup of morning tea (what dissipation), then lunch with Colonel Cresswell (leader of the South African Labor party) at Parliament House. I go to an orchestral concert in the Town hall again, then with Senator Ware to dinner and spend the evening with him.

**Saturday 23rd March.** Good-bye Capetown! We move away from the wharf at 10.30am. The weather is still very fine and the old protecting wall of granite looms up over the pretty city. Four times have I looked on you now - when again, I wonder? We move out quickly into the bay and are soon leaving the long range of mountains well behind. Out in the Southern Ocean there is a slight swell.

**Sunday 24th March.** Moving well out into the Southern Ocean on our last stage of the journey. A fine day with calm seas. Mac and the others leave their cabin and I surreptitiously sleep there in the night. It’s much more comfortable than the hammock. Reading a little during the day. Church parades don’t arouse my interest but I have a political discussion with Captain Henderson.

**Monday 25th March.** Well out to sea again - weather good and seas calm. I’m feeling *très bon*. I cannot help reflecting on the immense political problems that confront South Africa. We got a wealth of information in our six days’ stay there. Spend time reading, bridge playing and loafing generally.

**Tuesday 26th March.** Another fine day. Mac amuses me by counting the hours that have to pass before we reach Fremantle. The ship’s orchestra at last comes out and gives us some music and - ye gods - we get an issue of lime juice and some dinkum Aussy jam. Still reading and having a few rubbers of bridge.
**Wednesday 27th March.** Particulars taken for repatriation scheme and I request help in order to extend our little Mildura holdings. Weather still very pleasant. War news none too bright. Effect on boys rather depressing. To have lost all that Somme country, where so many of our Australian boys were killed, is rather dispiriting.

**Thursday 28th March.** Weather good but journey becoming monotonous. Reading a number of pamphlets given us by the Labor party in England before Mac and I left. They are quite interesting and will be very helpful later on. This point impresses me: whilst the class structure exists, the class struggle is inevitable. Can Captain Henderson’s suggestion of a synthetic movement help us? I am wondering.

**Friday 29th March.** Good Friday, with ye olde Hot Cross bun peeping innocently at us on our crude breakfast table. The usual services are held but I’m not interested. I feel like Jaurés to have cast religion and dogma from my life (if ever they were in it). Still reading a little and am having many helpful talks with Mac.

**Saturday 30th March.** Weather good, seas calm and the boys getting anxious for home and a release from the chains of military servitude. Discipline lax but the behaviour of troops is excellent. A concert on the well-deck in the afternoon by our pierrot troupe. The food is improving a little and we welcome issues of nice fruit, Red Cross lime juice and Australian jam.

**Sunday 31st March.** Again I miss Church parade. All the boys are indifferent to it - and no wonder, for the Padres never mingle with the men, but stay with the officers. The blind boys tell us that the padres have only spoken to them but once. We have a long chat to the blind boys who complain bitterly about their treatment.

**Monday 1st April.** April Fools’ day but I escape being fooled, although Alec tries to beat me. Weather still holding good and we are out in the Indian Ocean. Nothing of excitement taking place and I am filling in the time reading, playing bridge and chatting with Mac.

**Tuesday 2nd April.** Bob Billington (one of the blind boys) is up before orderly room and is admonished. He complains about things in general.

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8 A scheme to provide land for returned servicemen.
9 Jaurés was the French Socialist leader Jean Léon Jaurés.
Some of the blind boys told me that the food they received whilst prisoners of war in Germany was better than that given to them on board this ship. Rather stiff breeze blowing and seas choppy but not rough.

**Wednesday 3rd April.** I see the Colonel and draw two pounds and ten shillings [$150], so that I’ll have something for Perth and when I get to Melbourne. Big swell and ship is dipping somewhat, with the propellers out of the water quite a lot. Have a lazy day and play bridge and talk with the boys most of the time.

**Thursday 4th April.** Weather good and seas moderate. Nothing exciting to report. Still reading along the old lines and still being convinced of the weakness of capitalist society. Guild socialism offers a remedy to the dangers of bureaucracy.

**Friday 5th April.** I do a little writing in order to post when we reach the West. Everyone is guessing when the happy day will arrive - Tuesday next seems a popular guess. Weather has quite an Australian charm about it so we cannot be too far away. I’m sleeping anywhere of a night - sometimes in the hammock, sometimes on the floor of the deck.

**Saturday 6th April.** I do a little camera work and take a few snaps. Mac and I are taken together and then I have a little group of four Mildurians taken (Bill Allen, Smith, Stan Kerridge and Bob Thompson). Our troop pierrot show gives an excellent concert in the evening on the well-deck - an open-air concert mid-ocean.

**Sunday 7th April.** Taking things easy reading and writing a little. We are due to reach the West early on Tuesday morning, so there is quite a hum of excitement on the boat. We have still to negotiate the Bight, but that is nothing after our seven weeks of travelling. Enjoy a few rubbers of bridge.

**Monday 8th April.** Arrangements are being made for the disembarkation of the “Gropers”*. They are very excited - in fact we all are more or less. The war is forgotten for the homecoming transcends everything. We play bridge surreptitiously in Mac’s cabin until midnight. Glorious evening - typically Australian.

**Tuesday 9th April.** This eventful day dawns with the twinkling lights of Rottnest Island welcoming us to Aussie. As dawn breaks Fremantle comes in sight and we anchor at the wharf at 11 o’clock. The “Gropers” are disembarked and we get leave at noon. The Labor Party treats Mac
and me very well and, after seeing some of the Fremantle members, we are taken in a car up to the Parliament House in Perth. We are introduced to different members and invited to lunch. Afterwards we send wires, letters, etc, and are then taken out to Bayswater in a car. The Central Executive gives Mac and me a dinner in the evening and afterwards, with Jack Curtin, we return to Fremantle.

**Wednesday 10th April.** Mac and I were to have spoken last night at Fremantle in support of a Labor candidate for the Legislative Council. I got going but the Australian Military Police stopped me\(^\text{10}\). Then Mac started but he too was stopped and we were both placed under open arrest. We were released upon our undertaking not to speak again. We move off again at 1 o’clock on the final stage of our trip. Glorious day.

**Thursday 11th April.** Well out into the Bight now but the seas are phenomenally calm. Starting to get ready for Melbourne now and I do a little washing. Also write a couple of letters to the boys in France. The boat seems much quieter after the disembarkation of the Gropers. We had a glorious time in their pretty capital.

**Friday 12th April.** Getting near the journey’s end and the seas are still moderate. Despite the strenuous times ahead I’m quite tranquil. I meet a couple of Hamilton boys on board and they are very interesting fellows. One (Joe Ryan) is going to introduce me to a number of his friends in Hamilton\(^\text{11}\).

**Saturday 13th April.** War news tells us that Fritz has taken old Armentières\(^\text{12}\). There is hardly a brick that I don’t know in this French town. To me it seems that rather critical times are ahead and with the possibility of insurrection in Ireland\(^\text{13}\) if conscription is enforced, the Empire seems to tremble in the balance. Quiet day spent in reading, etc.

**Sunday 14th April.** Our last Sunday on board and it is as quiet and uneventful as its predecessors. I read, write and play bridge during the day. We have come through the Bight without having any rough public speaking in uniform was prohibited.

\(^{11}\) Hamilton was the main town in the electorate of Dundas.

\(^{12}\) The German Lys offensive started April 9, taking Armentières immediately and advancing 5 km on the first day. The offensive petered out and was suspended on April 29.

\(^{13}\) Britain had given Ireland home rule in 1914, but this had been rejected by Ulster in the north. Protestant unrest was reduced when WW1 began, but during the War the Sinn Fein movement gathered strength, seeking Irish independence.
weather. Right through, in fact, the seas have been remarkably calm.

**Monday 15th April.** Practically our last day on board and we are all getting busy for disembarkation. Victorian land is sighted at about 1 o’clock and we are not sorry to see it. We play bridge until very late in the evening. A number of farewells is made to chums whose friendship the journey has cemented.

**Tuesday 16th April.** This day of day dawns with us well into Port Phillip Bay. We are eventually disembarked at 12 o’clock and proceed in cars through Port [Melbourne]…
While Bill was returning from England, the war news was generally bad; the German spring offensives had made much ground using troops that were no longer needed on the Russian Front. However this was the Germans’ last chance to win the war; their advances soon stalled and the Allied counter-offensives caused a military and political collapse in war-weary Germany. The Allies had won, but the war had a terrible price of perhaps 20 million dead on all sides, of which 60,000 were Australians.

Upon his return to Australia, Bill’s first task was to go to Hamilton, the main town in his electorate of Dundas, to meet his constituents and thank the people who had worked to get him elected. For the next few years he lived and worked in Hamilton, travelling to Melbourne for sittings of Parliament. In 1924, when a Labor government was elected in Victoria for the first time, he was appointed Attorney General - at the age of 35 possibly the youngest person to hold this office in Australia. In the following years he held additional portfolios as Solicitor General and Minister for Agriculture in the Labor governments of 1927-8 and 1929-32. Although some of these periods in office were short, he managed to prepare and have passed some important legislation. He was most proud to have been responsible for legislation relating to Workers’ Compensation, the creation of Public Libraries and regulating the Adoption of Children.

In the 1932 election, Bill was declared defeated in the electorate of Dundas. He took the opportunity to return to study for a degree in Economics at Melbourne University, in the hope that this would help him understand the causes of the Depression, which was bringing so much misery at the time. Three months later, however, a recount showed he had actually won Dundas by 21 votes, so he returned to Parliament. For the rest of the 1930s he was an opposition MP, but he gained a reputation for fairness and judgement with members of all political parties. His popularity resulted in him being elected as speaker of the House of Assembly during the 1940 Country Party Government led by Albert Dunstan.

In the years between the wars, Bill’s legal career was also progressing. He graduated as a Barrister and Solicitor in 1922 and then worked for a while in partnership with Maurice Blackburn in Hamilton. Later, when
he moved to Melbourne in 1930, he set up on his own in a small office in Unity Hall, undertaking legal work for the Australian Railways Union. By 1935 he was keen to expand his practice and so took his brother-in-law, Hugh Gordon, into partnership. So began the now famous firm of Slater and Gordon. In his career both as a lawyer and a politician, Bill worked for justice for ordinary working people, helping to lighten the burden that fell on them in these difficult times.

Before the war, when he was living in Mildura, Bill had met Mary (also known as Maisie) Gordon, the daughter of David Gordon, an Irish-born horticulturalist, and his wife Mary. Both Bill and Mr Gordon were fond of an argument and, before one visit, Maisie pleaded with Bill not to disagree so much with her father. Afterwards, David Gordon complained to his daughter: “what was wrong with that young fellow today - I couldn’t get a decent fight out of him!”

Later, after he and Maisie were married, Bill formed close friendships with all members of the Gordon family. David and Mary Gordon had six children: Mary, the eldest, had a Master of Science from the University of Melbourne; Jessie, a Master of Arts, later married James Steele, a Major General in the British Army; Marjorie married Alan Henry, a Professor of Chemistry and lived in Khartoum; Isabel trained to be a nurse at the Royal Melbourne Hospital and then worked overseas; John studied Agriculture and took over the family property at Irymple when Mr and Mrs Gordon retired to Box Hill; and Hugh, the youngest, qualified in Law and became Bill’s partner in the law firm Slater and Gordon.

In contrast to the Gordons, who were scattered around the world, Bill’s mother Marie and sisters May (Toots) and Dorothy (Dor) remained in Brunswick - a Melbourne suburb close to Essendon, where Bill and Mary settled early in the thirties and raised their three children, Bill, John and Helen.

During these years Bill was generally in good health, in spite of the extraordinary amount of work he was doing. He did have peritonitis and suffered from duodenal ulcers for a time, but managed to recover with the help of a special diet with foods carefully prepared by his wife. After these illnesses he became more particular about his diet, being careful to eat only simple, nutritious food. He did not smoke or drink. To relax he would, when possible, spend weekends and holidays with his family at their beachhouse at Point Lonsdale. During the winter months he enjoyed VFL football on Saturdays and went for family
walks to nearby Queens Park on Sundays.

As well as his political and legal work, Bill somehow found the time and energy to devote to a number of societies and organisations. At various times he became President of the Law Institute of Victoria, Chief President of the Australian Natives Association, served on the executive of the Council of Civil Liberties and was a Trustee of the Melbourne Cricket Club and a Vice President of the Essendon Football Club. He also kept in touch with his boyhood pals from the Try Society and wartime comrades from the 10th Field Ambulance, attending their annual re-unions.

In 1939, 22 years after Bill had left the trenches of France, Europe was again at war. In September the Germans under fascist dictator Adolf Hitler had invaded Poland, forcing France and England to declare war on Germany. This, however, was to be a very different World War to the first. Vast improvements in war vehicles such as tanks, aeroplanes and trucks made this a war of movement. The German “Blitzkrieg” led to the fall of France in less than two months, and by mid-1940 Hitler dominated continental Europe. In June 1941, after his failure to subdue Great Britain, he turned his attention to the Soviet Union, disregarding the non-aggression pact he had signed with communist dictator Josef Stalin in 1939. Again his advances were spectacular, with Moscow itself threatened by October 1941. However the harsh Russian winters and the Soviet’s strong defence of Stalingrad turned the tide of the war by the end 1942.

To express support for the beleaguered Soviets, Australia’s Labour Government under John Curtin decided to appoint a Minister (Ambassador) to the USSR. Foreign Minister Herbert “Doc” Evatt nominated Bill Slater for the position, knowing his reputation as a “good Labor man” and the respect he had gained on all sides of politics. And so, at the age of 52, Bill stood down from his position of Speaker of the House to became Australia’s first Minister to Russia. He started a diary to keep a record of his travels and experiences.
WILLIAM SLATER’S VOYAGE TO RUSSIA, 1942.
Saturday 29th August 1942. At the conference of the Victorian ALP held at the Trades Hall, Jack Dedman [Minister for War Industry] indicated that the government intended to supply a Minister\(^1\) to Russia\(^2\) and wanted to know if I would be prepared to go. I expressed doubts as to filling the job. I saw Arthur Drakeford [Aviation Minister] later and he made some suggestions and asked me to give him my views. I told Mrs Slater of the conversation and agreed to give it some serious consideration.

Sunday 30th August. I saw Arthur Drakeford and indicated I was prepared to submit my name to go to Russia.

Monday 31st August. Bert Evatt [Foreign Affairs Minister] phoned from Canberra expressing satisfaction at the submission of my name and asking for a definite reply, and urging that I should phone him within an hour. I expressed unpreparedness to do this, as I desired to fully discuss all aspects with Mrs Slater. I had a long talk with Mrs Slater, with all phases turned over, and finally we agreed I should be prepared to go.

Tuesday 1st September. I phone Bert Evatt in Canberra and indicate my willingness to go if selected. A very short phone conversation ensues between us.

Wednesday 23rd September. Bert Evatt phones me from Canberra when I am in the Speaker’s Chair in the House to inform me that the nomination of my name has been approved in Moscow. He adds that the appointment is practically fixed but that he or the Prime Minister [John Curtin] would make a public announcement within a few days.

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\(^1\) In diplomatic terms, a Minister (who is in charge of a Legation) was lower in rank to an Ambassador (in charge of an Embassy). An Ambassador to the USSR was first appointed in the late 1940s.

\(^2\) Actually the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). The USSR was often referred to as “Russia” even though it included other states such as the Ukraine.
Tuesday 29th September. At town rumours are very current about the appointment, but I only say the matter is not yet official. At a meeting of the Parliamentary Labor Party in the evening I indicate my appointment and that I might be going away in a short time but would peg my seat in the House.

Tuesday 6th October. Maurice Blackburn called at the office with a message from Bert Evatt that the announcement is to be deferred until next week when it is expected that the name of the Russian exchange Minister will be announced.

Thursday 8th October. Jack Chapple called and asked if consideration could be given to the claim of Mr Luscombe for inclusion on the staff.

Friday 9th October. I attend the 24th re-union of my old AIF unit (10th Field Ambulance) and tell them of my appointment, which is received very cordially. A surprise presentation is made to me.

Monday 12th October. I am phoned from Canberra and asked to leave for the Capital tonight. On the train I see Jack Barry [Barrister] and Arthur Calwell [Federal MP] and we have a long talk. Calwell is very opposed to the Prime Minister. I also see Jack Holloway [Federal MP], Jack Dedman and Jack Holland [MLA, Victoria] on the train and am at Albury before I know where I am.

Tuesday 13th October. I arrive at the Capital at 9am and breakfast in Canberra, then go to Colonel Hodgson’s [Secretary, Dept of Foreign Affairs] office for preliminary talks. Staff questions are first discussed - his plan is for departmental men [career diplomats], but I offer some suggestions. I am able to get Professor Max Crawford appointed First Secretary and Bill Duncan as Industrial Adviser. Keith Officer is to be counsellor [adviser to the Minister].

We go over to Bert Evatt and staff appointments are discussed and settled. A Miss [Irene] Saxby, who is in Moscow, is to be archivist and John Fisher, who is at present representing the ABC as Press

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3 Indicating that he was taking up another position for the War, but not giving up his seat.

4 Peter Heydon would later join the staff. Heydon later wrote; “Only Officer and I were career diplomats...Evatt believed in “Left speaking to Left”, but the career diplomat is generally best equipped for posts under tension...because he is not emotionally involved with the ideologies at issue”. Aust Journal of Politics and History, Vol XVIII no 2, p190.

5 Bill knew Max Crawford (Professor of History at Melbourne University) through the Council of Civil Liberties and the Australia-Soviet Friendship League.
Correspondent [in Moscow], is to be the Legation Press Attaché. After lunch (which we had at Parliament House) I return to Colonel Hodgson where further plans are discussed.

Late in the afternoon I receive word to go to Government House where I am cordially received by [the Governor General] Lord Gowrie and Lady Gowrie and we have a pleasant talk. I attend a late afternoon party at Colonel Hodgson’s house and meet representatives of the Consular corps. I have dinner with Bert and Mrs Evatt before catching the train.

I forgot to mention the Press conference in Bert Evatt’s room. Representatives of all the papers were there and displayed a very friendly attitude towards me.

**Wednesday 14th October.** I return to Melbourne and my son Bill meets me at the station. John Rodgers is there on behalf of the Australia-Soviet Friendship League [ASFL] and wants me to be given a farewell on Sunday at the Princess Theatre. Norm Bennett is also there on behalf of the Lord Mayor [T.S. Nettleford] who wants to tender a civic reception. I find the Press has given my appointment great publicity and cordial approval. I have been receiving many wires and letters of goodwill.

**Thursday 15th and Friday 16th October.** Hundreds of letters and telegrams are pouring in and I hope I get some opportunity of sorting them out and classifying them.

**Saturday 17th October.** I work all day at the office to clear up a great deal of office work. At night my wife Maisie and I go to tea at Doris McCrae’s. Mr and Mrs Sampson are there and we enjoy a quiet but interesting evening.

**Sunday 18th October.** I attend my last parade with the Volunteer Defence Corps. It is very moving when Major Frank Wheatland makes a presentation to me from the old 10th Field Ambulance and the 1st Medical unit. I make a short speech in reply. This afternoon is a memorable one as there is the big demonstration in the Princess Theatre organised by the ASFL, with 4000 people in and outside the theatre. Percy Laidlaw occupies the chair. Maurice Blackburn, Rev. Thomas, Jack Cain, Miss Lambrick, Professor Crawford and Ralph Gibson and myself are the speakers.

I receive a wonderful reception and acknowledge it as admiration of the

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6 The Australian “Home Guard” of older men unable to go on active service overseas.
Russian people and what they mean to us. The collection yields £214 [now A$9500]. Before the end of the meeting Jack Chapple presents me with a 30 × 15 inch Australian flag with the Eureka Message\(^7\) embroidered upon it for presentation to Mr Stalin. I am asked by Albert Monk, President of the ACTU and Jock MacKay (representing Munitions Workers Union) to convey fraternal greetings to the Russian Trade Unions.

Earlier in the day I had talks with the Prime Minister John Curtin and discuss certain aspects of policy.

**Monday 19\(^{th}\) October.** I am in contact with Colonel Hodgson and he reports progress regarding our departure. I also speak to Keith Officer on the telephone from Canberra and arrange to see him on Thursday. Plans are made for inoculations and vaccinations.

**Tuesday 20\(^{th}\) October.** An eventful day - I remain in the Chair for the last night (at the suggestion of the party leaders) in order that the Party may meet and decide upon the selection of my successor. At lunchtime the Government tenders me a luncheon in the main dining room. Members of both houses attend together with the Press. A toast to my health is submitted by Premier Dunstan and supported by Sir Frank Clark with Jack Cain and Bill Everard representing the Labor Party and United Australia Party respectively. I duly respond. At the end of the sitting I announce my intention of resigning [as speaker of the Legislative Assembly] and will submit my resignation to the Clerk. Premier Dunstan, Jack Cain and Bill Everard pay me compliments for impartiality in the Chair and I thank them and refer to the part the office of Speaker has played in the structure of Parliament. I remind them of Speaker Lenthall’s famous reply to King Charles I: “It is rather a sad note on which I put my final resolution: ‘That the House do now adjourn.’”

After the dinner the Labour Party places on record a minute of appreciation of my services which it will endeavour to have translated into French and Russian and sent to me.

**Wednesday 21\(^{st}\) October.** I confer with Keith Officer for the first time and we discuss plans about leaving Australia within a fortnight. We get on well together.

\(^7\) The miners’ oath from the Eureka Stockade: “We swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other and fight to defend our rights and liberties”.

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[94] War Diaries of William Slater
I have my first inoculation against typhoid and it shakes me up a little. I attend a late afternoon party at Mrs Milner’s where I meet a number of university people and Professor Crawford is warmly welcomed. Jack Knox succeeds me as Speaker defeating Trevor Oldham by two votes.

**Thursday 22nd October.** A hectic time in the office trying to complete my work. I accept an invitation to have lunch at the barracks with Arthur Drakeford and Reg Pollard [MHR]. Frank Forde [deputy PM] and Ben Chifley [Treasurer] are also present. General discussion on my mission and the war position.

At night I have dinner with Sir George Rich, Sir John Latham and Bob Menzies - also Keith Officer. After dinner I attend the Melbourne Branch of the Returned Soldiers’ Association [RSA] where I am greeted by an enthusiastic gathering of soldiers and presented with a fine Australian rug. I speak feelingly on the Russian position and my remarks are well received. George Holland, President of the Victorian Branch, makes a cold speech as far as Russia is concerned, but it is not well received.

**Friday 23rd October.** Another very active morning in the office and in the afternoon I confer with Keith Officer and the Minister [Evatt] on routine matters. Later the Minister and I confer alone and we discuss the war situation generally and I am to get more specific information without which I feel my mission would be hampered.

At five o’clock I face a somewhat critical ordeal as the Lord Mayor of Melbourne tenders me a civic reception at which a large and representative gathering of citizens is present. Six Cabinet Ministers attend including the Deputy Prime Minister Frank Forde, Dr Evatt, Arthur Drakeford, Norman Makin, Dick Keane and Don Cameron. I manage to make an effective reply to the speeches wishing my mission a success.

**Saturday 24th October.** More photography by the Department of Information and then another inoculation - this time against cholera. A short conference between Professor Crawford and Bill Duncan at my office and then I rush off to a farewell being tendered for me by the Board of Directors of the Australian Natives Association [ANA]. There is a very large and friendly gathering in the Boardroom, that beautiful room at the tables of which I have so frequently sat on many of our discussions. Jack Menadue, Chief President, is in the chair with Val Dimelow, vice president, supporting him. The Chief proposes my health in an address that is very eloquent and frank in its relation to Russia.
(praiseworthy). Val Dimelow, Mr Dods - (chairman, Metropolitan Committee) and Cr A.D. Freeman (one of the veterans of the Board who came with George McLean from Castlemaine especially for the function) also spoke. I was presented with magnificent gifts - a suitcase, companion set and dispatch box. Altogether it was a very memorable occasion and one that I will never forget. I hope I am able to justify the warm, friendly and eloquent things said about me.

Later the family decides to go to Point Lonsdale where I can have at least the rest of the day and all day Sunday with the family. It is a glorious spring day and we enjoy the quiet run down to the Point very much.

Sunday 25th October. Another glorious day at Point Lonsdale with the family. Bright warm sunshine and I lie on the sand until my face is burnt, but I love it all as I wonder where I’ll be before many more Sundays pass. We call in and see our good neighbours the Stephens family and enjoy a quiet talk before we return to Melbourne.

Monday 26th October. I leave with my wife Maisie, Arthur Drakeford, Jack Cain and Reg Pollard for my final meeting at Hamilton. We motor up and call to see Stewart Milton, secretary of the Trades Hall at Ballarat. At Hamilton Ernie Bond and Don McLeod join us. Prior to the public meeting we all attend a meeting of the ALP and are welcomed by George Shilcock, the Perpetual President of the Branch. I thank the branch for all that it has done for me down the years.

The public meeting fills the town hall and there is a great platform. George Shilcock presides and on the platform are R. Thomas (Mayor of Hamilton), G. Chester Prescott, (from Dundas Shire), J.B. Westcott (representing the legal profession), E. Downs (RSA), E. Holden (ANA), Canon Jessop (High School Council) and all the parliamentarians. Altogether I listen to 13 speeches and receive presents from the ALP and RSA of fine fountain pens. The warmth and enthusiasm of the meeting is unforgettable and I particularly enjoyed meeting so many old friends and stalwarts who came to the meeting, including Jack Murray of Cavendish (my dearest friend), old Jack Jennings (over 90 years old), George Scarborough and many others.

Tuesday 27th October. Jack Cain and I avail ourselves of the opportunity given by Arthur Drakeford, who is Minister for the Air, to return to Melbourne by plane and we leave at 8.15 and are in Melbourne by 9.30. It was Jack Cain’s first flight and everything was perfect for him - a blue cloudless sky and no wind. George Frost, MLA
for Maryborough, had died the previous day and Jack was anxious to be back when the House met so that he could join in the tribute to his memory.

On our return to Melbourne, Mrs Drakeford very thoughtfully had arranged a luncheon at the house and we all enjoyed this. I dine at night with Pat Gorman, Jack Barry and General Wynter, GOC Australian Corps. We have a long chat after dinner and Pat is anxious that I should visit Palestine on my journey to Russia⁸. General Wynter’s description of the Battle of Britain gave me a new view of the epochal struggle.

**Wednesday 28th October.** The State Labor parliamentary Party entertains me at lunch in the House. Speeches referring to my service to the party are made by Jack Cain, Dan McNamara and N. Osborne, the president of the Trades Hall Council. I also receive a couple of interesting presents.

**Thursday 29th October.** I face one of my hardest days. The ACTU gives me a farewell lunch at the Australia [Hotel]. Albert Monk presides, and the executive officers of the Central Executive of the ALP are also present. Warm and friendly speeches are made by both Albert Monk and Charlie Crofts and by a representative from NSW. I indicate in my reply the part the Trade Union movement has played in Russia’s great reconstruction.

Later in the afternoon my fellow trustees of the Library and Art Gallery, under the chairmanship of Sir Keith Murdoch, say goodbye to me with a cup of tea. I am urged to advise on art and library matters if possible and Daryl Lindsay asks for [Russian] catalogues.

At a quarter to five Mr Woodford, warm friend and secretary of the Police Association, comes with the vice president of the Association to say farewell and to hand me over a thermos flask and case. At five o’clock Ian McEachran, President of the Law Institute, had assembled our fellow councillors at the Athenaeum Club where, over a glass of sherry, farewell speeches and my response were made. I also promised to let them have, if I could do it, sketches of the Russian legal system.

The day has not, however, concluded for me as I am farewelled by my old school tie friends of the Try Society at 8 o’clock in the old place [the Try Society Hall in South Yarra]. Nearly 50 from my boyhood days

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⁸ Eugene “Pat” Gorman, founding member of the Council for Civil Liberties, had been commissioner of the Australian Comforts Fund in the Middle East in 1940.
of 35 to 40 years ago were there and my welcome was of the friendliest. Sid Hawkes was the chairman and J.C. Butler, W.C.D. Forster, Arthur Mills, Les Hillard, Bert Whitehead, Jim Sharland, Nick Carter, E. Spackman, Harry and Bill Butler, Bill Darvall, George Williams, Teddy Good, Jim Howell, Joe Maloney, Bill Vivian and others, whose names for the moment I cannot recall, were there. I had to tell the story of my life from the Try days onwards - as they knew it too well up to that stage. The Sun, commenting on the farewell the following day, said that I had been the champion of football, swimming and mischief in my boyhood days at the Try.

Friday 30th October. Another busy day with lots to do at the office. At midday I went to Yarraville where the employees of Cumming Smith and Co. were farewelling my colleague and friend Bill Duncan. He received a wonderful reception and was presented with a splendid kangaroo skin rug. From this farewell I had to hasten to Government House where the Governor [Sir Winston Dugan] had invited me to lunch, It was a private lunch, with only His Excellency, his secretaries and Sir E. Holden and myself were present.

At night I had to attend the Russian Ball at St Kilda Town Hall. The success of the function was amazing and a net profit of £1000 [$44,000] was made for the sheepskins for Russia appeal. Judge Foster introduced me to the audience at suppertime and I had a few words over the mike.

Saturday 31st October. No engagements today, but a day of concentrated work in the office in order to try and clean everything up. Took Ted and Mrs Hill and Miss Fowler to lunch at Scott’s [Restaurant]. After lunch we all returned to the office where I received my present from the staff - a magnificent kangaroo skin rug. It was a splendid present and will be a reminder to me of the loyalty and friendship of my colleagues in the office.

Sunday 1st November. The photographers will keep at us. A Pix representative came this morning and insisted upon taking a number of family pictures. Maisie had packed my luggage with her characteristic skill - nothing forgotten and all surplus and unrequired things properly discarded. John and Dorothy Gordon [my brother-in-law and his wife] with their few-months old baby and Mr and Mrs Gordon [Maisie’s

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9 Judge Alfred William Foster was president of both the Australia-Soviet Friendship League and the Sheepskins for Russia Appeal.
parents] came over from Box Hill to be with me for the last few hours. We all left for the train rather early as I wanted to see Miss Stuart who was lying very ill in hospital. At the station Jack Cain and Arthur Drakeford came to say goodbye. They have been my closest and best friends and I wish them both well in the difficult spheres they occupy in the Australian Labor movement. Maisie was fortunately coming to Sydney with me, but it was hard to say my goodbye to the nips. They are all wonderful children, each with their own different characteristics.

My sisters Dorothy [Slater] and Toots [May Callaway] were also at the station and were very moved at my departure. I recollected how similarly affected Toots was when I left on the *Runic* to go to the war in 1916. We had as a fellow passenger on the train Mr Lasica, who made all our leather clothes (and such splendid examples of workmanship too). Our train was halted at Wallan where we lost an hour, which was not made up during the rest of the journey. I had a good night’s rest on the train but Maisie didn’t sleep at all.

**Monday 2nd November.** Arrived at Sydney at ten o’clock. Mr Dalziel (Dr Evatt’s secretary) met us with a car and we were whisked off to the Australia Hotel. I lost no time in getting to the Department of External Affairs where I commenced dictating many letters and worked steadily until lunchtime. Bert Evatt gave me a very interesting lunch at the Carlton Hotel. About twenty-four were present including Bill McKell, (NSW Premier), cabinet ministers, proprietors of the papers and Sir A.J. Davidson, (manager of the Bank of NSW), the Lord Mayor of Sydney, representatives of the RSA including Lord Cutler VC, and others. It was informal and thoroughly enjoyable. Bert Evatt and Bill McKell proposed my health and the Lord Mayor supported it. I told them I wasn’t sure of my credentials in the political world as the Queensland *Courier Mail* had described me as a Leftist in Victorian politics, which corresponded with a moderate Labor man in NSW.

At 3.30 I was tendered a civic reception at Ushers Hotel. It was organised by Harold Redding and his friends of the ANA and had been magnificently planned. Representatives from all walks of Sydney life were present and I was overwhelmed by it. Politically it was predominantly rightist but the measure of its cordiality and warmth to me was unstinted.

Mr Griffiths (the Federal President of the ANA) occupied the chair and after a few words of welcome he called on Dr Evatt to propose a toast to my health. This was supported by Billy Hughes and Milikayer, the
representative of Tass Agency in Australia. I overcame my sense of great nervousness in replying to the Toast and indicated the object and purpose of the mission as I saw it.

After the reception I accompanied Mrs Jessie Street to the rooms of the Aid to Russia society and saw some of the sheepskins that were awaiting consignment. We discussed the type of skin that was being sent and I promised to make inquiries in Russia as to the type they desired. The society is doing wonderful work and the response of the community is amazing.

At night our big meeting organised by the Official Labor Branch of NSW takes place at the Assembly Hall. There is an audience of 600 or 700 and it is a very friendly one. Maisie is with Kathleen Sherrard and her husband and Mrs Evatt. I meet a number of old friends; Mrs Leah Wilson, Alec Strang, (who returned with me from the war on the Llanstephan Castle) and Gordon McLean, my old comrade of the 10th. Mr Taylor chairs the meeting and the speeches are all of high standard. Bill McKell makes an effective speech, as do Dr Evatt and Charlie Frost (Minister for Repatriation). My colleague Professor Crawford delights the audience with his quiet wit. I am given a warm welcome, which I rightly attribute as an expression of admiration for the gallant soldiers and citizens of the USSR. After the meeting I invite Dr and Mrs Evatt, Bill McKell and the chairman to supper and thus ends one of my most strenuous days.

**Tuesday 3rd November.** Up early and have breakfast with Jack Parker at the External Affairs office. After 9am I continue the dictation of a lot of letters. At 12.30 (with Bill Duncan) I attend a meeting of the Miners’ Council of Australia and am asked to convey fraternal greetings to miners of the USSR. I lunch with Mr Lasica and a friend and after lunch see Arthur Pirani, an old Try Boy pal of 35 years ago. He has done well in the racing world. Maisie and I then go out to Kathleen Sherrard’s home at Centennial Park and stay there until it is time for me to return to the city en route for the North. She motors Maisie and me back to town and Maisie returns with her, for which I am very glad as our leave-taking is a sad one. I complete a bit of work at the Department and then set off for Mascot. Our plane to Brisbane is due to depart at 6.30, but it is 8.30 before it leaves. The trip is a very smooth and enjoyable one and is Bill Duncan’s maiden voyage. He likes it and feels none the worse for

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10 Tass was the principal news agency of the USSR.
it. We reach Brisbane aerodrome close to midnight. 

Surprise awaits me as Keith Officer is there and tells me that we are to leave immediately - I don’t mind as I had made no plans for Brisbane. We move off in a US car to the US drome and, after a two hour wait, are in one of the flying fortresses on the first stage of the big journey. There is a good number in the bomber and we are disagreeably crowded but make the most of it. Two of us are sleeping head to feet on a narrow bunk and, with the great noise of the four engines, I soon gather up a headache which persists. However even the most unpleasant of experiences has a limitation and at about 7am we are at Noumea.

We land at an aerodrome (US) and have a hurried and rough breakfast at the camp. I don’t feel like eating anything but drink a little coffee. There is no scenery to describe, as the aerodrome is set down on flat ground surrounded by low hills with the sea a little distance away. Our stay in Noumea is limited to an hour and we are off again - whither we do not know.

It is now Wednesday the 4th November and we move across the bright waters of the Pacific, which glistens thousands of feet below us. On and on and on with nothing to break the monotony. It is difficult to read and impossible, because of the noise, to speak. Towards midday land is sighted and we learn we are at Fiji. We land again at another US aerodrome and are whisked up to the officers’ quarters where a welcome shower is available. My headache has continued and I don’t feel like lunch, but nibble at the food served in the officers’ mess by native boys. The quarters are very comfortable and the mess appears to be quite good. (I am writing this on the plane and it is jumping about a lot, hence the very irregular writing). As I was fatigued after the experience of the fortress, I rested and slept all the afternoon and was only wakened for tea at 7 o’clock. I enjoyed a meal of bread and butter and tomatoes, leaving the meat and vegetables untouched. I am missing a cup of tea very much, as only coffee is available.

The camp is surrounded by sugar fields and reminds one both climatically as well as geographically of Queensland. After tea we sit out on the large veranda and I recall Mildura with the chirping crickets and the warm soft air.

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11 Bill could not journey directly to Russia because of the War position; Japan held much of Asia and the Germans much of Europe. He also had to rely on American assistance.
Thursday 5th November. Up at 6.30 as we leave at 8. Right on schedule we move down to the fortress and are in the air again on time. The weather is warming up considerably and I wish I had my cooler clothes, but collar and tie and coat are quickly shed. We leave Fiji at 8 o’clock and are on our way to Canton Island - 1500 miles or thereabouts. The fortress is somewhat crowded which makes it rather uncomfortable, but the time passes although it is impossible to concentrate on reading. I content myself most of the journey in sitting quietly in the bomb tray. I get a little headachy but it is not too bad.

Our flight is over the sea all the way and we reach Canton Island about 3 o’clock. It is much like Daydream Island in North Queensland, except that it is quite flat and is composed of shingly coral rock. Military considerations prevent my description of it, but the Americans have done a good job here. It was not long before Keith Officer and I were in the warm waters of the Pacific. We didn’t venture far out, as notices in all the rooms draw attention to the waters being shark and ray infested, so we contented ourselves by being about ten feet out - nevertheless we enjoyed the water very much.

At the Officers’ mess (where we had tea) we had stew, mashed potatoes and a rather nice large green bean. There was for sweets a sort of cranberry tart, and to drink we had cold water and cocoa - strange contrasts, to be true. After dinner we spend an hour with the Officer in Command, Colonel Hemspherd, and find him very interesting. He indicated that the men only remain on the island for six months, when they are given leave.

We retire early as the order is to rise at 4.30 in preparation for departure at 6 o’clock. The night is warm and pleasant; there are no mosquitoes owing to the lack of vegetation - I only saw a single palm tree on the island.

[Thursday 5th November, No 2]. I think I am a day out in my reckoning as we have lost a day and it is therefore only Thursday. Up at 4.30, breakfast at 5 - fried eggs and coffee - hardly what I like but I nibble a little toast and jam. It is a warm tropical morning, but pleasant, and we are in the air at 6 o’clock as per schedule and well on our way to Honolulu. The trip is uneventful as we fly over the Pacific at a cruising speed of approximately 200 mph. I finish Quentin Reynolds’ *Only the Stars are Neutral*, so the day is not long in passing and at 3.30 we land in this vivid tropical isle. Our landing ground is immediately next to Pearl Harbour of such recent tragedy. We clear customs and are then
provided with a sort of jeep and taken into the city. We stay at the Moana Hotel, which is right on the Pacific and at the Waikiki bathing beach.

There is a very mixed population on the island with a great number of Japanese; estimated to total nearly one third of the entire community. Their status and treatment is giving the US administration much food for thought.

**Friday 6th November.** I sleep badly as the night is warm, but my room is one of the best in the house and faces the Pacific. I go in for a swim before breakfast with Keith Officer. The water is enjoyable and we make the most of what is likely to be our last swim for a fair time. The hotel is comfortable and the meals good - the manager is an Australian with whom we make friends. After breakfast he takes us for a ride in his car around most of the island. We pause at a place called Palais Point and look across a most fertile valley, with farms looking luxuriant with all the tropic colours so rich and vivid. Beyond the valley lay the blue waters of the Pacific.

The houses and gardens in the hills looked bright and seemed to confirm the view one has of this rich tropical isle. After lunch we managed to get some money from the Bank on our letter of credit. Before going to the aerodrome, Mr Officer and I paid a visit to the Admiral commanding the US naval forces at his quarters at Pearl Harbour. The Harbour still bears signs of the treacherous attack of Japan nearly a year ago. On the plane again at 6.30 and we are off on our long trip of 2800 miles across the Pacific. It becomes very cold in the plane and I find the rug and overcoat very useful. I don’t manage to get much sleep and am very happy when at last we arrive in the USA.

**Saturday 7th November.** [6.30am] (or in American time 8.30) and we are in the USA. The crew of the “ship” did a good job in bringing us from Australia. They were a calm good natured and competent lot of fellows and I got to like them very much. After a wait at the aerodrome, we go in a car to the City of San Francisco. The day is sunny and bright but a piercing cold wind is blowing and I am glad to have my coat. The country is very much like our Australian land and, with late autumn, the fields were all brown and dried up. We had to cross the famous Golden Gate Bridge, which crosses the neck of the harbour, and its giant form rises hundreds of feet - it is a splendid engineering triumph. We pass through the city to our hotel, the Fairmont, and are struck with the very steep nature of many of the streets along which cable trams still run,
reminding us of Melbourne.

Mr Officer decides to fly on to Washington straight away but we [with Bill Duncan and Max Crawford] want a rest and decide to stay here until Monday and then to cross the continent by train, as we have been the best part of a week in the air.\textsuperscript{12} Mr [Godfrey] Fisher (the British Consul) lends us his room, pending our getting rooms, and we are able to have a bath and change our clothes. Max Crawford has a letter of introduction to a Dr Meyer, a famous research man, and he asks us to lunch with him at his club. We spend the afternoon with him and he shows us round some of the streets where splendid departmental offices and public buildings have been erected. Altogether he was most interesting and, as an adamant liberal, he appealed to us very much. Mr Fisher asked us in for a drink at his suite at 6 o’clock and after a few minutes we left.

There were two functions this night to celebrate the 25\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the Russian Revolution; a public meeting at the Memorial Opera House and a Russian Ball at our very hotel. We decided to attend the public meeting and were invited to occupy seats on the stage. The theatre is one of the finest I have ever seen and you could put all our Melbourne theatres into it. I dare say it could accommodate more than 7000 people.

The program was unique. There were two guest speakers (as they term them); one a Member of Congress, the other an ex-Secretary for State. The Russian Consul also spoke. A Negro sang and a film star, Ruth Hussey, recited a message to the Soviet women. It seemed to us that the whole thing was professional but lacked the warmth and spontaneity of our Princess Theatre meeting. The audience for such an occasion seemed disappointing, as not 1000 were present. At all events the principal speakers emphasised the necessity for the second front\textsuperscript{13}.

After the meeting we were brought back to our hotel by one of the staff of the British Consul’s Office, a young chap who had been in Russia but who in our view was anything but sympathetic with, or even knew much about, the administration. The good (?) advice he proffered me only made me smile as I nudged Bill Duncan who was sitting next to me in the car.

\textsuperscript{12} Bill doesn’t mention in the diary that 14 days were required between their first and last inoculations in the USA; hence their lack of urgency to continue to Russia.

\textsuperscript{13} The war against the Germans was at that time being fought on only one front, by the USSR. The Soviets and others were pushing for a western front in Europe or N. Africa.
**Sunday 8th November.** We slept in rather late and it was 10 o’clock before we were out. After a light breakfast consisting of grapefruit juice, raisin toast and tea we went for a ride on one of the cable cars and went down towards the docks. Shipping centres are very much alike all over the world and San Francisco is no exception. One thing struck us forcibly and it was the contents of the rubbish bins, full as they were to capacity with tins of all sorts. I’ll wager there are more tin-opener cooks here in San Francisco than any other place in the world.

After a good dinner at the hotel, our good Samaritan Dr Meyer came to the hotel in his car. We were taken for a wonderful ride across the eight-mile Berkeley Bridge to the other side of the bay where we came to the large suburbs of Oakland and Berkeley. At Berkeley is situated the famous California University and Dr Meyer showed us, with deserved pride, the campus and many of the buildings. The library is a gem. It can seat 500 students and its form and setting made a great appeal to me. Although it was Sunday afternoon the library was well filled, mainly with women students.

From the University we climbed the hills to Berkeley where some of the nicest homes are situated. Autumn’s hand was deeply on tree and shrub and flower and it all bore a matured and satisfied appearance. No fences surround any of the houses, the types of which appeared most comfortable. The doctor wanted us to see some of the countryside, so on we travelled to Walnut Creek. The descending fogs robbed us of the views but we saw the character of the country which was very little different from our own.

Here at Walnut Creek I get my first impression of a notary’s wide divergence of office over here, for one advertised real estate, warm water and hot dogs!

Cars, cars, cars…I suppose the reason for the never-ending stream is the fact that gas is only 18½ cents a gallon for top grade spirit.

We returned to Dr Meyer’s laboratory at the Research Institute and he gave us our final TAB [typhoid-paratyphoid A and B] inoculations. We went for tea to a Chinese restaurant (said to be run by the University) but frankly the Chinese food didn’t appeal to me - I think it requires a taste for it which I have not yet cultivated. We were all dog-tired and went to bed as soon as we returned to the hotel.

**Monday 9th November.** The inoculation played up with us all - none of us slept well, and I was up before 7 writing letters. We went to the British Consul’s office and fixed up about our travel across the
continent, then we went and got some funds from the bank. A train ride (very cheap - five cents) took us to one of the outer suburbs and it filled in the morning for us very well.

The British Consul invited me to lunch with him at the Stock Exchange Club, where I met a couple of men who had been in Russia. One, a Free French Naval Officer, the other, a mining engineer, had been with President Hoover. Mr K. Beattie, former Chief Justice of Gibraltar, was also a guest. A great discussion ensued on the opening of activities by the US troops in Africa and high hopes were spelled out of the engagement.

After lunch we picked up our tickets for tonight’s departure and later in the afternoon went out by car to see the famous Golden Gate Bridge. It has been a glorious sunny day and in many respects has reminded us of Australia. At 8pm, on our way to the train, we go on a ferry under the famous Oakland Bridge, the amber lights of which make a necklace across the water. I am very tired and go to my roomette on the train and enjoy a good night’s sleep.

**Tuesday 10th November.** I draw the blinds of my carriage and see the sun just creeping over the snow-capped Sierra Nevada ranges. There has been a heavy frost on these high plains, over which our train runs very smoothly. The country for hundreds of miles is poor and consists of salt pans. The severity of the frost is seen in the villages through which we go - all the leaves of the trees and shrubs have been browned off. The only stock I saw, almost through Nevada, were isolated herds of Hereford cattle. It must be like the badlands of Dakota.

The train is most comfortable and the meals in the diner very good, although dear. The minimum cost of any sort of a meal is at least a dollar, and of course there must be added the current tip, which is equivalent to 10% of the cost of the meal. All the car attendants and the waiters in the diners were Negroes. They seemed to be casual but not sycophantic.

I spent most of the day reading Oswald Garrison Villard’s autobiography *Fighting Janus*. He was the radical liberal editor of the *American Nation*. The number of cars hauled by the engines on these lines is astounding - I saw sixty vehicles being hauled by a single engine. At night we have left Nevada and are crossing Utah and go within thirty miles of Salt Lake City, immortalised by Brigham Young.

**Wednesday 11th November.** We passed close to the Rocky Mountains during the night and I believe we are now close on 7000 feet above sea
level. I draw my blinds and find the sun shining in a cloudless sky, but
the ground is snow covered. As we are in air-conditioned carriages and
are quite warm, the view appears beautiful but incongruous. For hours
we run through this state of Nebraska. At first the country is rough and,
from the appearance of the Hereford herds, it looks to be ranch areas.
Subsequently the country changes and we enter plains, which appear to
be fertile as crops of maize, dairy stock and hogs are seen. Every few
miles small villages appear with those quaint (to us) white houses with
no fences surrounding them.

We stopped at Omaha, the capital of Nebraska, and had a walk in the
frosty evening air whilst engines were being changed. I saw an amusing
sign on a railway watchman’s hut. “No visiting with the watchman
whilst on night duty”. Along the line I also saw a notice on a building
“Law Office” and on the next door “Poultry Room”!

Thursday 12th November. Our train is due at Chicago at 8.30am but is
an hour late. We have two people looking for us; Dr Burchison, the
health officer of the city, has been advised by our good friend Dr Meyer
of our coming and has sent someone to meet us. The British Consulate
has also sent an officer. I go to the Consul’s office, exchange greetings
and shortly leave to see Dr Burchison. This health officer is a most
dynamic person and he tells us the story of how he has brought down
the infant death rate in that great city (which has more than half the
population of Australia within its municipal borders). He has acted
without legal power and quite unorthodoxly but has got results. I think
his methods have so terrified the medical profession that they
completely cooperate with him and, because of this cooperation and
consultation, he has won through. Whilst we were with him a notable
visitor Sir John Orr, the British authority on nutrition problems, came in
and we heard the Doctor’s story a second time.

I returned to the Consulate to phone Washington as instructed, but was
unable to get on to anyone in the office. Before our train left we were
taken on a short drive around Lake Michigan. The parklands in front of
the Lake and Art Gallery stand out as splendid monuments to
someone’s presight. The Art Gallery building is isolated and is oblong
in shape; it is magnificently proportioned and architecturally very
notable. On the train again at 2.30 and we pass through rich farmlands
with dairying and corn (maize) growing the dominant industries. I don’t
sleep well at night and wake up at midnight as we pull into vast
Pittsburgh, the giant steel centre, the bright furnaces of which shone out
in the frosty night air.
**Friday 13th November.** 8.30am - our train is on time and we are at New York. It is inclined to be a drizzly day with a keen wind blowing. We move off to the Ritz Carlton Hotel where I am shown into a fine suite. After breakfast I receive a phone message from Washington advising me re planes and luggage. Then I confer with Mr Binley of the Australian Department of Information. We assure him on certain matters that are the subject of whispering campaigns against Australia in the USA, namely the coal and shipping [labour] troubles. He seemed rather pleased with our assurances and facts.

We spend a good deal of the morning in Macy’s vast emporium getting the clothes we are short of. In the afternoon Mr Gartside of the Australian Trade Commissioner’s Office takes us for a notable ride round New York. We go down avenues and streets famous in American history: Broadway, Madison Ave, Fifth Avenue and Wall Street to mention but a few. We have pointed out to us the skyscrapers of the Empire State Building, Woolworth’s, various banks, insurance and other office buildings. On we go to the Hudson River where we look across to New Jersey and in the centre of the stream is the famous Statue of Liberty. We proceed along the river and go into the Cloisters, a magnificent building erected in a high position. It houses priceless medieval tapestries and biblical figures, and also statues and carvings (both in wood and stone), many of which had come from Spain and France. John Rockefeller Junior has, at the cost of many millions of dollars, been responsible for this gift.

We proceeded further along the river and to our amazement and joy saw berthed side by side the *Queen Mary* and the *Queen Elizabeth*. The latter was a particularly interesting object to us as it had only been reported in today’s newspapers that she had been torpedoed in the Atlantic. In the next berth was the ill-fated *Normandie*¹⁴ lying over on its side and in the process of being salvaged. Our driver assured us that the shipwrights were confident of its salvage and restoration.

We saw in succession the Italian, Jewish and Negro districts. Harlem (the Negro centre) is an eye opener - for more than a mile in this area we saw nothing but coloured people. There are 400,000 of them in Harlem and a poster claimed that 20,000 Harlem people had enlisted in the American Expeditionary Forces.

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¹⁴ The *Normandie* had caught fire while docked and the water poured on to put out the fire had made the liner capsize.
After this most interesting drive we paid a visit to the Russian Consul where we were most cordially received by him and his staff. We stayed about an hour and were asked many questions about Australia. I gathered the impression that the Russian people are kindly disposed towards Australia. As Mr Gartside had been so good to us, we asked him to have dinner with us and suggested he might indicate the place. He said a place named *Gallagher’s* was very good and was interesting as a sight.

We accordingly went to *Gallagher’s*, which is a famous theatrical and sporting rendezvous. Lining all the walls were photos of film stars, actors and actresses, baseball players and footballers, racehorses and racing events - it is truly a sporting shop alright. We called for roast beef, the minimum charge for which was $1.75 (about 8/- [$22]) and the serving they brought us would have satisfied a family. It was 9pm when we left Gallagher’s all fuller if not wiser men. Mr Gartside then wanted us to go to the pictures, but we decided to return to the hotel.

**Saturday 14th November.** The rooms of hotels, stores and generally all places are considerably overheated and I think that has been responsible for some of the headaches I have been suffering - I had another last night. After breakfast we did a little more shopping, and got lighter bags in view of the 55 pounds limit for the rest of the trip. Got more money from the bank and joined the Washington train at 11.30. Had an interesting run - it being a bright sunny day. Under the Hudson River, through New Jersey State down through many large and notable towns like Philadelphia and Baltimore, until we reached Washington at 3.30.

We were met by the Australian Ambassador Sir Owen Dixon and the staff of the Australian Legation and I was taken to the Embassy where Lady Dixon made me feel at home. Dr Norman Morris was there - the last time I had seen him was at the Russian Red Cross luncheon at the Federal Hotel a few months ago. We were served an enjoyable cup of tea and I got ready for the party Lady Dixon had arranged for 6 o’clock. It was a notable party and I had a chance of meeting such important people as the ambassadors of most of the legations including Lord Halifax [Great Britain] and Litvinov (the new Russian Minister to the USA).

I also met Walter Nash from New Zealand, the King’s brother-in-law the Honourable Bowes Lyon and most of the Australian people in Washington including all the Military, Naval and Air attachés. The party lasted until 8 o’clock after which we had dinner and then I had a
long, interesting and revealing talk with Sir Owen which continued until 12.30am.

**Sunday 15th November.** Weather bright and sunny but air cold. Sir Owen takes me for an interesting drive. First we see the memorial to Lincoln - a square shrine in white marble with a fluted column for each of the 36 states in the Union at Lincoln’s time. Inside the imposing structure (to reach which one climbs a long flight of marble steps) is an enormous sculptured figure of Lincoln sitting in a chair and facing George Washington’s obelisk and the Capitol itself. Lincoln’s Gettysburg and second inaugural speeches are embossed on the walls and above his sculptured figure are the words:

_In this Temple as in the hearts of the people for whom he served the Union the memory of Abraham Lincoln is enshrined forever._

We were then taken to see the Pentagon - the largest building in the world - which is to house about 25,000 civil servants. From there we went to Arlington Cemetery - the national burying ground - and here lie the bodies of hosts of soldiers killed in American wars. Robert E. Lee, the confederate General, lived at Arlington and his house still stands. The open-air Greek theatre, which is used for memorial services, is a striking structure.

Our car then took us back across the Potomac, the broad river which slowly moves down to Chesapeake Bay. We passed the many beautiful administrative buildings for which the capital is rightly famous, and finally paused outside the large domed Capitol, the Parliament of the States. To emphasise the gravity of the coloured problem we returned to the embassy via the Negro quarters and there we saw many of the 200,000 members of this unfortunate race who live here in Washington. Late in the afternoon we attended an anniversary of the Philippine Republic and heard a speech in person from Quezon (president) and [recorded] broadcasts by the presidents of the USA and Mexico.

Sir Owen, Lady Dixon and I had invitations to dine with Joseph Davies, US ambassador to the USSR in 1937-8 and author of _Mission to Moscow_. I had heard of the great wealth of the Davies family but, unless one gets behind the doors, one has no imagination of its extent or splendour. All the rooms were furnished with pictures, with tapestries, with statues and with ornaments of all countries and ages. About twenty of us sat down to dinner and the services were almost beyond description - gold forks and spoons and dishes of (alleged) one time royal ownership. I had no real opportunity to discuss Russia with the
host except to say that his book has created a big impression in Australia and that, to lawyers, his story of the trials and purges made a big appeal. I am quite unaccustomed to dinners of this character and was not sorry to be home at the Legation - but it was midnight when we got there.

Monday 16th November. A couple more inoculations for typhus and yellow fever with more yet to follow.

Went with Sir Owen Dixon to see Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador to the USA. Had a quiet talk before a cosy fire for about three-quarters of an hour. Discussed the war situation and problems of peace. He seemed to indicate the desirability of the British National Government continuing after the war. I think his deep religious feelings emphasise much hostility to Communist canon, although he didn’t appear to show any hostility towards Russia.

Mr Sol Bloom, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives, showed us into the Diplomats’ Gallery of Congress and we heard the debate, or procedure of the House, for about an hour. Procedure in some respects is similar to ours but in many ways entirely dissimilar. I asked Bloom who was best orator in the House and he said there were none as the forms of the House made effective speeches impossible. The procedure allowed one minute to a speaker who read a prepared speech into a microphone. In other matters the time limit was five and sometimes ten minutes only. No great interest seemed to be evinced in the proceedings. I was interested to see that members could bring their young sons (and I presume their daughters) to sit beside them in the House itself.

After lunch we visited the Mellon Gallery and saw some of the most famous pictures in the world. The paintings of the Masters of every school, age and country were represented and my co-trustees of the Melbourne Gallery would share my envy if they had my experience today. Our driver said that some fifty million pounds [now $2.2 billion] has been spent on the building and its pictures and I can readily believe it.

Tuesday 17th November. I spend some time in the office writing. Have lunch with Mr Hacker, a friend of Ewart Norris, whom I met in Melbourne last March. After lunch I visit the Congressional Library -

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16 A wartime coalition of all parties.
one of the largest of the American libraries. I can see now the pattern on which our Melbourne Public Library has been planned. Inside the library are frescoed walls and ceilings typifying literature, history and philosophy of the ages.

After browsing about for a while, I went to the Supreme Court building (another magnificent white marble building) next to the Library. The Court was in session and I heard some appeal case being argued. Counsel spoke very softly - he was very close to the Bench and it was extremely difficult to follow him.

He speaks from a small rostrum placed immediately in front of the Chief Justice.

I had a chance of looking at Washington from the top of the Washington Monument, a plain stone obelisk which rises 550 feet. I got a wonderful panorama from the top. To the east the Capitol, to the west the winding Potomac River across which many bridges run, and in the distance Arlington Cemetery. To the north the White House - the home of the President - and to the south the Judiciary areas. It was bright sunshine and the views were grand. The weather today has been very kind to us - it has been a warm, pleasant autumn day and I have enjoyed every minute of it.

At night I attend a small dinner given by the New Zealand [deputy prime minister] Walter Nash. I sit next to Sir John Dill, of whom Sir Owen Dixon speaks most highly as a most competent soldier. We only discuss Australian questions so I get no glimpses of the war situation. Walter Nash appears radical and wants to see the Atlantic Charter made into a charter for the whole world.

**Wednesday 18th November.** I spend an interesting hour at the Supreme Court where I am introduced to the Chief Justice Stone and Justices Roberts and Frankfurter. I also witness the opening of the Court at 12 noon. Its form of procedure is not unlike our own. Motions for admission of Counsel are also similar to our own except that the Counsel moves on his own certificate that the applicant for admission has the necessary qualifications.

After lunch I hold my first press conference - about 15 [reporters] all

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17 A statement made by Roosevelt and Churchill after their Mid-Atlantic meeting of 1941. Set out aims for the post-war world, which later formed the basis of the United Nations.
told. It is not unfriendly and I hand them my specially prepared statement. Then the barrage commences and I am interrogated on a variety of matters concerning Australia. The principal questions asked were in relation to coal and shipping. I was also asked by the representative of the Hearst press if Australia would sever the Imperial connection and whether we thought Britain was doing enough in the war and if our troops were not carrying the burden of the Libyan battle. Altogether an interesting encounter but I wasn’t very afraid of it.

Later we went to that wonderful Smithsonian Institute which contains the history of everything - boats, trains, aeroplanes, war material, ladies’ dresses etc, etc. Very, very interesting but one would want a full day there. Then I had another look at the Lincoln memorial, this time with Max and Bill. We all went away very impressed with the beauty, majesty and power of this wonderful tribute to one of America’s greatest men. The evening is spent quietly with Sir Owen and the family.

**Thursday 19th November.** Formal matters attended to in the office. Weather again mild and enjoyable. Have lunch at Metro Club as a guest of Mr Stewart of the State Department. Sir Owen is with me. British and American foreign policy since the last war is the principal matter of discussion. After lunch I spend the afternoon in Mr Stewart’s department, and am able to see reports of conditions generally at both Moscow and Kuibyshev. The reports and survey are good guidance to me. At 5 o’clock Sir Owen and I call on Sumner Welles. I am impressed with his power which rests behind an exterior of quiet dignity and repose. We only shortly discuss very general matters.

Tonight is Sir Owen’s dinner party in my honour and it is a memorable affair. I put on record the guests: three ambassadors; Lord Halifax, Litvinov, and Admiral [William] Standley, five ministers [to the USA]; Sir Owen Dixon, [Leighton] McCarthy (Canada), Bloss (South Africa) Baijpur (India), Sir John Dill and myself; three high officers of the Department of State and Mr Officer and Watt. I sat next to Litvinov and Bloss and during the dinner had an interesting, although general, discussion with them. However I made an appointment to see Litvinov on Monday.

After dinner I had a very interesting talk with Admiral Standley, who

18 The new US Ambassador to the USSR.
19 Churchill’s representative in Washington.
has just returned from Russia and who returns there within the next few weeks. He described conditions there and I readily gathered from his attitude that he is sympathetic to the regime and apparently gets on very well with it. I am confident my relations over there will be friendly and co-operative.

**Friday 20th November.** Another inoculation for tetanus after which Max and I leave for Baltimore where we have arranged to see Dr [Henry] Sigerist, the medical historian of Johns Hopkins University. He wrote *Socialised Medicine in the Soviet Union.* We got there at 11 o’clock and had two hours’ interesting talk with him. There is no doubt where he stands in relation to both Russia and the problems of medicine. He has been to Russia three or four times and has made an intensive study of medicine there and is doing good work with his students in getting them to document the social implications of this science. He gave us quite a lot of his articles on medical and historical problems. Afterwards he took us to lunch at the university with colleagues of his in the History and Philosophy schools, and we had a cordial exchange of views.

We didn’t see much of the city of Baltimore, in which there are one million people, 25% of whom are Negroes. On return to Washington I went to a cocktail party at the Canadian legation. I am afraid I can never be attracted by any belief in the utility of these parties, but I suppose it’s part of the game. I spent a quiet evening with the Dixons and enjoyed the restfulness of it very much.

**Saturday 21st November.** I am feeling the effects of yesterday’s inoculation against tetanus. I call and see Admiral Standley (US ambassador to Russia) and have a general talk over life and conditions in the USSR. I think he will be helpful to me in my work, as he is certainly very friendly.

With Sir Owen I call and see Cordell Hull; nothing much is said other than an emphasis upon the importance of diplomatic representation in Russia. Hull appears to be old and doesn’t strike me as having the same power as Sumner Welles. Then on to see Dr [Stanley] Hornbeck, an adviser to the US government on eastern affairs.

Lunch at the British Embassy with only a small number of guests: Sir Owen, Oliver Lyttleton (British Minister of Production); Sir Walter Langton (economic adviser to the minister); Arthur Krock (noted American journalist); a Mr Wilson (head of electrical undertakings in the USA) and Sir Zuprulla Khan (Judge of the Federal Court of India). I
am placed next to Lord Halifax. Discussion is very general, but Halifax gets an impression from Sir Zupulla Khan of the very hostile feelings of the Chinese people towards Britain. Halifax asked me for a picture of labour conditions in Australia - he seemed very afraid of Communist influences. Sir Owen, with great lucidity and strength put Australia’s position in the southwest Pacific and the need to recapture Rabaul. The need to hit Japanese shipping power was stressed, just as Hornbeck had suggested earlier in the day.

Later in the day I have a long talk with Walter Lippman, another very prominent American journalist and commentator. Lippman thinks Italy will not remain in the war much longer, and then feels that an attack on the Balkans through Crete and Greece will most likely achieve results. He expressed anxiety as to naval engagements in the southwest Pacific - the margins for success being too small and the dangers of defeat being so vital.

We see an entertaining Russian musical comedy of the *Vulgar Volga* and all enjoy it very much. The acting and singing and the pictorial scenes of the Volga were all of high standard.

**Sunday 22nd November.** A rather raw bleak day, so I have a restful time at the Legation and read in front of the fire most of the time. At 6 in the afternoon we go to another diplomats’ cocktail party at Sir R. Baijpur’s place (he is the agent general for India).

**Monday 23rd November.** Another inoculation at 9 o’clock (the second for typhus). At 11am I have an hour with Litvinov. We confer together and have an interesting general talk. He is anxious to know whether we will be drawn more closely towards the USA as a result of the war. Whilst conscious of shipping difficulties, he feels that outside support to his country is being given very slowly. He appreciates the position in North Africa and when I told him of Lippman’s theory he approved it but would like a real attack upon the European Atlantic coast.

McGregor, the officer in charge of procurement of supplies for Australia, tenders our party a lunch at the Mayflower Hotel. It is very representative of the administrative officials who deal with supply problems for the allies. Bill Duncan and I leave by the 4.30 train for Canada.

**Tuesday 24th November.** We are in Canada and reach Montreal at 8.50am. Weather fine at first but very frosty and the street thermometer shows 22°F at 11am. It is a busy city, with plenty of evidence of its strong French population. We agree that the Canadians as a type are
different from the Americans and we are happy to find that they have no
colour population problem. We walk around the city until our train
leaves for Ottawa at 4.30pm.

We arrive in Ottawa at 8 o’clock, and we are met by Mr Deschamps of
Sir William Glasgow’s staff and taken by train to the official residence
for dinner. A long talk with Deschamps after dinner reveals social and
industrial conditions in the province of Quebec, the population of which
is predominantly French-Canadian. There is no compulsory education
in the Province and the power of the unions and labour is weak. There
are some Catholic unions, but these are frowned on by the industrialists
as well as the workmen.

**Wednesday 25th November.** Sir William Glasgow takes me into his
office where we discuss a variety of matters. His office is opposite the
splendid block of buildings of parliament. We have a quiet lunch and I
invite Mr Deschamps so we can have a quiet but informative discussion
with him.

After lunch we meet representatives of the Canadian Trades Unions.
We have a long talk and get a glimpse of their difficulties. They
indicate that their movement has no socialist objective and that to strive
for such would split the movement. They simply function to preserve
and improve wage standards and conditions in industry. They remain
neutral in politics and seem (like their American comrades across the
border) to think they can use each party for effective purposes of
bargaining for their ends.

The Communist party seems weak but there is a visible change of
attitude of the public towards it, as Communist leaders who were
interned in the early days of the war have been released. A political
committee has also recommended to the Government the removal of the
ban on the Communist party.

We are shown over Parliament House by the clerk. It is a magnificent
building, the chief features of which are its Gothic entrance hall,
octagonal shaped library, its elongated House of Representatives
chamber and the beautiful chapel of Remembrance for Canada’s fallen
in the First World War. I gathered from the clerk that procedure is
pretty well the same as ours. Liberals are in great strength, having about
170 seats in the House of little more than 220.

I spent the evening with Sir William Glasgow. We listen to the speech
of Wendell Willkie given at Toronto in aid for Russia and addressing an
audience of 17,500 people. His speech was admirable and would have
done justice to any adamant member of the left.

**Thursday 26th November.** Weather still mild, about 35°F. Bill and I walk down to the markets and see the fruit and vegetables. I think they bear poor comparison against our own. We also see the pictures in the Gallery, including some nice Gainsboroughs and a delightful Corot.

I have lunch with Sir William Glasgow and a Mr Robinson, the deputy director of the External Affairs Department. In the afternoon we have a long talk to an Australian, Mr Deans, who is doing YMCA work and is a friend of Mr Deschamps. He is a keen Left Book Club member, and we talk of the existing position of radical thought in Canada. He shares our despair as to the future of the left movements in both the USA and Canada.

At night Sir William Glasgow tenders me a dinner at his residence and about 20 guests, including the Canadian Minister designate to Russia, Mr Wilgress, are present.

**Friday 27th November.** I see the Canadian Supreme Court in action. A patent case is being heard and only the two counsel engaged in the case are in court. No public, no press, no solicitors or clients. I discuss procedure with one of the counsel and he tells me of the conventions. Quebec must always have two French Canadian authorities on the bench and a Canadian RC [Royal Commissioner?] from Ottawa must, in addition, be a member of the court. I go up the 250-foot tower of Parliament House and get a good panoramic view of Ottawa. Alongside Parliament House the Ottawa River flows and already ice was coming down the stream. On the Eastern side of the river are many paper pulp industries.

I am invited to have lunch at Government House with the Governor General the Duke of Athlone and Princess Mary. Only three aides, Miss Baird (a daughter of Lord Stonehaven) and I are present. I am questioned a little as to conditions in Australia but otherwise talk is very general. The Duke came to Australia for the opening of the first Federal Parliament.

We leave at 4pm for New York, stopping at Montreal to be entertained at dinner by the Director of the International Labour Organisation [ILO]. We talk over the work of the ILO and the part it is hoped it will play in reconstruction. Our hosts are most anxious for us to use our influence to get Russia in the ILO as the part the USSR is expected to play in the post-war period is freely conceded.
Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> November. In New York. At 8.30am Mr Officer has arranged for us to see the Morgan Library of old books and prints. It is a remarkable collection all housed at the millionaire’s residence. We then get the most wonderful panorama (probably in the world) from the top of the Empire State building, 102 stories and over 1000 feet high. Well above the sea of skyscrapers, the views enthral one. On our right the Hudson River with numerous deep-sea and coastal craft and the ill-fated <i>Normandie</i> still on its side. On the other sides of the view, buildings stretched out almost to the horizon.

We lunch with Mr Gartside, Mr McLean, Mr Drakeford and a Dr Nalder and have a free talk over a variety of subjects. After lunch we visit the Anzac Club, which is doing splendid work for Australian and New Zealand soldiers and airmen. I invite Jean Love and her mother to dinner at our hotel and after dinner (with Bill Duncan) we see an ice hockey match which lives up to the reputation of the game for speed and roughness. A great free-for-all occurs with half a dozen players in a brawl (the umpire is even knocked) and all that occurs is that four players leave the field for five minutes under a major penalty. We saw these games at the famous Madison Square Gardens - the seating capacity is said to be 25,000.

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November. As arranged, we go to Mr McLean’s suburb - Westchester - and he takes us for a drive to see some of the excellent homes in this area which is on the opposite side of the bay to Long Island. We are shown around one of the luxurious country clubs with its nine stories and its polo ground, golf links, enclosed swimming pool and everything that money can buy. Afterwards we lunch with Mr McLean and his wife and family. They are charming people with great Australian sympathies and outlook. They are very liberal and favourably disposed to Russia. Altogether we spent a delightful happy time with them. We returned to Washington by the 5.30 train and are met again by Sir Owen Dixon.

Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November. Our final inoculation against typhus, and we now have our certificates signed showing inoculations against all the undesirable diseases of Africa and Asia.

Sir Owen Dixon and I lunch with Justice Frankfurter in his chambers at the Supreme Court. He asks for my frank views about America and I tell him of my fears so far as [right wing] re-action is concerned. He has an alert and penetrating mind and he engages me in a subtle process of cross-examination. However his broad liberalism and pro-British
attitude is stimulating.

We see Philip Murray late in the afternoon and have a long discussion on American trade union and labour problems. He assured us that they believe they have greater strength in bargaining by remaining aloof from political organisation. He expressed himself as favourable to the visit to the Americas of a Trade Union delegation from Russia.

I spend the evening with Mr and Mrs Hacker, the American friends of Ewart Norris. They show me a happy collection of pictures (non-moving) in colour photography and thrown on to a screen. The pictures of Australia’s best flowers and trees and shrubs and of the Nicholas homes at Burnham Beeches Sherbrooke made me pine for home. Americans to whom they show these pictures from time to time hardly believe they are true.

**Tuesday 1st December.** Luncheon at the Russian Embassy. I meet both Madame and Monsieur Litvinov and have a good talk with them both. Litvinov told me the true story of his being refused a seat on the plane a year ago when he was on his way to the USA. He is still conscious of the great strength of Germany and, whilst encouraged with the picture of the war today, argues that the end is very distant. The meal was partly Russian and some of it I rather liked, notably the borsch soup. The vodka and wines I left untouched.

Late in the afternoon we have a conference with William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, and one of his assistants Robert Watt. Frankly the discussion staggered me. They both are out and out supporters of the policy of free enterprise and I believe are hostile to Russia. I argued at length but it became a wrangle, and I gave up in despair.

I say goodbye to the Dixon family who have shown me much friendship, and I have been helped greatly by staying under their hospitable roof.

**Wednesday 2nd December.** Mr Officer and I boarded the train at Washington at 11.30 last night, but it didn’t start until 3am. When I woke we were in Richmond, the capital of Virginia. We passed through Virginia and the Carolinas and saw cotton, tobacco and cornlands, and also the croppers’ cottages which were not too attractive. In a few places cotton blossoms were still on the dead bushes, but the hand of autumn held all the land in its grip. The soil appears light and easy and in fact seems very little different from the agricultural lands which we saw in Nebraska.
Thursday 3rd December. Our train is four hours late, so instead of arriving in Miami at 7.00am it is 11 before we reach this bright and sunny Florida city. Weather is warm here and we quickly go to the hotel with Peter Heydon (who met us at the train). We get into our summer wear - rather strange to recollect us nearly freezing at Montreal this day a week ago, and now we are back to summer clothes. We then go for a long taxi and bus ride to a beach where we have a delightful swim in the Atlantic Ocean. The water was as warm as it is in North Queensland in wintertime. Most of the hotels (and they are enormous places) have been taken over by the military and there are many thousands of air trainees here. We saw great numbers of them in the streets. For more than 100 miles in Florida [in the train] we passed cottages, bungalows and mansions - the winter residences of many of the comfortably-off American people.

Friday 4th December. Another fine warm day and, as I expect to be here for some days, I arrange to take a two day trip to Cuba and tentatively book my passage by plane - the flying time being one and a half hours. However Peter Heydon advises me at 11am that he and I are to leave for South America on Sunday, so my trip to Cuba is off.

In the afternoon we go for a trip by motor boat through the waters of Biscayne Bay. We see the reclaimed islands on the bay upon which are now erected many most beautiful homes of affluent Americans, from all the States, who have reaped so many of the rich plums of the tree of private enterprise. Our guide on the boat knew the names of the owners of these places, which really are a winter paradise for these fortunate people. Incidentally, our guide gave us a little of the history of the place - forty years ago there were 12 families in Florida and now the population is 172,000.
Saturday 5th December. As Heydon and I are to leave tomorrow\(^{20}\), a good deal of the day is occupied in having luggage and passports checked. Late in the afternoon Max Crawford and I go down to the swimming beach. It must be 15 miles from the town and requires the use of two bus services to get there - however we are repaid for our efforts, as the water is glorious with temperature at about 71 degrees and a good deal of wave movement. Many of the beach frontages are owned by the hotels and private people, but this after all doesn’t surprise us because of the idols of free enterprise which are so lavishly worshipped here.

I receive my first letter from home and am overjoyed to have the news. As we are to leave at 1am, I only get a couple of hours sleep.

Sunday 6th December. We move out to the aerodrome at 1am only to be told that the clipper is 2½ hours late, so instead of leaving at 2.30am it is 5 o’clock before we leave. The clipper, which prior to the war flew the USA-France route is splendidly comfortable and very different from our last trip in the bombers across the Pacific.

We sleep fitfully in the chairs until daylight and then find ourselves well at sea. We have breakfast on the plane and it is nicely served. The captain invites me upstairs to the navigating part of the clipper, and it is to me a mechanical maelstrom. One realises the extraordinary ingenuity or rather cumulative brilliance of mankind. From my vantage point I saw us steadily flying over Cuba, whose verdant hills and valleys were bright under tropical skies. Haiti was then on our left as we steadily flew on to Trinidad. We also passed over Santa Domingo [Dominican Republic] and Espaniola [Hispaniola Island] - famous because of its discovery by Columbus. These islands looked at their best from the air and the seas fringing the coast were opalesque.

After leaving the islands, we flew over the Caribbean seas where U-boats have levied a high toll in recent months. It is dark when we reach our destination of Trinidad and we are unfortunately not able to see anything of this British Colony. We land and go to the leading hotel, where we have dinner. Pass through the native areas en route to the hotel and they seem to be very numerous. We leave Trinidad at 9pm and I am lucky to get an improvised bunk, so manage to get some sleep whilst the clipper flies on through the night.

\(^{20}\) There was a difficulty obtaining passages to Cairo, so Officer had left first, followed by Bill and Peter Heydon. Max Crawford and Bill Duncan would follow a week later.
Monday 7th December. At dawn I wake to look out on the mouth of the Amazon River, whose swirling mud-coloured waters sweep swiftly out to sea. The jungle we see on the banks of the river is very dense but there are odd clearings here and there. It may be that they are attempting to plant rubber in these regions again. At one time it was the chief raw rubber producing area of the world until the East Indies challenged and displaced these plantations.

We berth in the river and get on to a launch and are taken to a barge, where we have breakfast. We don’t get off to see the city which is on the left hand side of the stream and which at one time was said to have been very prosperous. Belem is the name of this place and it is the Capital of the Para State in Brazil. We leave Belem at 9am and go for hundreds of miles over Amazonian jungle, most of which I dare say has not been penetrated by man. When we leave the jungle the country changes into arid, rough stony lands. Later it appears as if some of the land is planted. The appearance from our height 10,000 - 12,000 feet is that it is used for cattle raising chiefly.

At 4pm we arrive at Natal [Brazil] where we alight, as we are to stay here overnight. After clearance from customs and immigration authorities, we are taken to an annexe of the hotel at which we are to stay. It is rather rough but appears to be clean. The population of this town, which air travel is now making prosperous, is very mixed - there are Portuguese (and that is the basic language), South American Indians and many other racial mixtures. I long for a swim and, although it means engaging a taxi, I go off before dinner to the beach and, in the glorious warm waters of the Atlantic, I enjoy myself very much. After dinner Peter and I go for a walk round the town, and we turn in early so we can rise early in the morning and get a good look at the place.

Tuesday 8th December. Up at 6 o’clock. I didn’t have a bad night’s rest despite the very hard bed. They make provision for the climate as only a thin sheet covers you and you don’t even need that. Peter and I go for a walk and visit the native market, which for smell is about the highest I have yet experienced. Natives are there in droves buying and selling fruit (oranges, pineapples and bananas) and fish and meat. Everything is dirty and evil smelling and I determined to eat no meat whilst here. An interesting sight is the use of donkeys, which carry extraordinarily heavy loads of merchandise. Weather is very sticky, as might be expected having regard to our nearness to the equator.

Although scheduled to leave at 10, it is noon before we leave and so we
continue our rambles round the town. We see another native market bigger than the first one we saw and certainly more evil-smelling and dirtier. Also looked in at a Church service (Roman Catholic). It appears to have a big hold in South America among the Latin peoples. The service appeared to be all ritual and no preaching - perhaps that accounts for its hold on the people.

We leave at noon and pass, en route to the hotel, the poorer types of native houses - they are made of mud, are extremely small and squalid and house lots of people of all ages and sexes. Here and there natives exposed different foodstuffs for sale, but I think I would have to be at starvation point before I ate any of it.

Off on the clipper on our long 1800-mile trip across the Atlantic. The Clipper is reasonably comfortable and we settle down to read. To get away from the warm, sticky weather we climb to 10-12,000 feet, where it is cool and bearable.

**Wednesday 9th December.** The estimated time of crossing is 14 hours but we have to advance our watches three hours, so at midnight we have a sleep on the improvised bunks and at 5am we are awakened at Africa; Fisherman’s Lake [an RAF base in Liberia] to be accurate. It is then dark but warm and we pass through the usual passport and immigration checking and then go to a new meal room, which the Pan American Airways have built. This company has built up a vast air service and is efficient and careful. We enjoyed our 6,000 miles in the clipper we had travelled on, and now said goodbye to it. After breakfast we rested in one of the huts, as the weather was warm and steamy. There was nothing to see in this new airport.

Towards midday we are taken out to the new aerodrome where ingenious steel runways are laid down on the bare sand by the native labour. The natives are jet black with short, curly hair and seem a stronger and cleaner type than the South American natives and cross-breeds. We are held up at the aerodrome and don’t leave until 1pm and then we go without lunch or any prospect of getting anything until Accra is reached, and it is 900 miles away. Our plane is a converted one and the 24 passengers sit on side benches. The seats are aluminium so are not too comfortable, but I have my rug. We climb to get away from the ground heat and traverse the Atlantic, hugging the coast and skirting [Liberia], Ivory Coast and Gold Coast. Our course is due east. At times we get glimpses of old village settlements, and here and there quite big towns loom up. I spend most of the five hours in reading.
We reach Accra, capital of Gold Coast Colony [now Ghana] at 6pm. As darkness had set in we saw little of the town, which has a population of 50,000 people. We take nearly two hours in clearing luggage and customs. When my identity is made known the clerk rings someone and I am soon informed that I am to stay with Lord Swindon (previously Sir Cunliff-Tristin). In a short while a car comes for me and I am taken to his residence. I meet my host who, whilst holding his seat in the British Cabinet, is administering the direction and organisation of war supplies in this part of Africa.

I have a welcome bath and change of clothes and then am introduced to his staff of about 15 and have dinner with them. After dinner we have a long talk in his lounge and I am questioned as to Australia’s failure to form a National Government, I put Labor’s constitutional and logical objection. We also discuss the future and Lord Swindon’s belief is that the National Government in England will continue, claiming there is little between [Herbert] Morrison’s views and his own and that Capitalism, whist remaining in the saddle, will be limited and controlled. I put my own socialist attitude on the hopelessness of the future under a de-controlled or controlled capitalism, but I am afraid my views fall on very stony soil.

Thursday 10th December. We have to spend a day at Accra, as no plane is leaving. A car is made available to take me to the town, as Lord Swindon’s residence and his offices are at the Acriimento University. This is a native university, which trains the natives in such subjects as education, arts and handicrafts; there are no other faculties. I understand good work is done in these subjects and, from the little I have seen of the natives, I would say that they appear intelligent and would respond rapidly and well to education. They have helped tremendously in the military and air work that has been developed here.

I go to the camp where I pick Peter Heydon up and we then go in the car to the town, which is certainly one of the most interesting and unique I have ever seen. Accra consists of a main street which houses several English banks, a post office, cable office and one decent store. The rest of the buildings are small native shops where foodstuffs, mainly fruits, are sold. On the sidewalks were hundreds of these jet-black Africans. I can now understand Livingstone’s “darkest Africa” - it must have been the deep colour of the natives that inspired the title. The type of native on the whole is good. In stature tall and erect, they are an imposing race and their bearing is in no small part due to the habit they have of carrying weights on their heads. The women appear a good type of
people and they also are very erect. They have the interesting habit of carrying their babies across their buttocks by some clever shawl arrangement - the babes appear satisfied and content and seem to stay put.

When a large building was pointed out to me as being the Courts, my curiosity was at once aroused and I decided to inspect. Administrative offices were on the lower story and three courtrooms, all both lofty and spacious, occupied the upper storey. In Court One, a misappropriation action was adjourned and in Court Two, I saw the Supreme Appeal Court of the West African Colonies functioning. The three judges constituting the Court were British, but all counsel appearing were natives, all of whom graduated in England and were members of the English bar. Both judges and counsel were wigged and gowned, as in our own courts.

The appeal before the court was very interesting. It was from a decision of one of the colonial courts on the question of certain priorities in respect to writs of Fi-Fa\(^2\) issued by two different tribunals. The facts, as far as I was able to gather them, were that a certain native farmer bought a crown farm for £34 in October 1939. It was sold pursuant to a Fi-Fa issued by a tribunal against the owner farmer. Prior to this another tribunal had also issued a Fi-Fa but no sale had been made pursuant to this writ, although it was earlier in time than the one upon which the sale was made.

The matter came in the first instance for adjudication by a native tribunal, against whose decision appeal was made to a superior native tribunal, from whose decision appeal went to the Colonial Supreme Court. The matter had then been carried to the West African Colonies Supreme Appeal Court. Some of the native lawyers with whom I discussed the case said it may now go to the House of Lords, as the natives are very fond of litigation - it seems to give them the prestige they aver. The £34 crown farm has been a veritable gold mine to some of our fellow practitioners in “darkest Africa”.

After leaving the dignified Supreme Court I went to the Magistrates’ Court. It was an amazing sight. Fully 200 native spectators crowded the floor and gallery of the large Courtroom. Order was kept by six large and swarthy policemen in orthodox navy blue uniform and hard caps. A

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\(^2\) A Fi-Fa (Fieri Facias) is a writ ordering a levy on the belongings of an adjudged debtor to satisfy the debt.
native magistrate occupied the Bench. A native clerk, who it was said understood all the native dialects, acted not only as clerk and interpreter - he seemed to do all but make up the magistrate’s mind. Despatch was the order of the day and a great number and variety of cases was heard in the hour we were there. Even an inquest was sandwiched in between cases of breach of lighting regulations, unlawful assault, larceny, being on the aerodrome without a permit and (the cause-célèbre) unlawful selling of illicit gin. The last charges were preferred against several women who seemingly had plenty of supporters in the body of the Court. The ringleader, a brawny native, was fined £15 (in default six months imprisonment) and she slipped downstairs to “take it out”, only to return in a few minutes to ask for time to pay. After a wrangle the magistrate, (who struck me as being a humane as well as an understanding person) allowed the payment of £10 down and the balance in a month, provided a suitable security were given for payment of the balance. The other women who pleaded they were only helping the “boss”, were fined £5 and £2 and the magistrate dryly commented that they should look to the “boss” to pay. When we left the Court we saw about 40 women gathered round. We were told they were members of the “illicit gin” ring and that they had already made up a pool for the payment of the fines. I remarked to my native lawyer friend that human nature had a fairly common basis all over the world.

I forgot to mention the baby monkey which made friends with me at Fisherman’s Lake. It was like a human baby and it snuggled down on my lap and took all the stroking I gave it. It reminded me of our dog Paddy.

**Friday 11th December.** We leave Accra at 7am, but return shortly as one pilot had left his logbook behind. Off again and we soon cross into French Ivory Coast, hugging for a while the Atlantic. Soon, however, we move inland. We constantly see native villages with the mushroom-like huts. Some form of primitive agriculture is practised but, from our height, we couldn’t define it. The trip gets a bit rough so we move up above the clouds, but it continues to be rough. We reach Kano in Nigeria at about 1 o’clock and come down for lunch. This place is densely peopled (its population is over 100,000) but we saw little of it except from the air. The huts were quaint square squat mud buildings and an old mud wall surrounded the town.

We leave again at 2 o’clock and are now well on towards the border of Nigeria and French Equatorial Africa [now Chad]. It is dry and warm here with none of the humid conditions typical of the coast, and I am
reminded of a midsummer day in Mildura. Again we see plenty of villages with traces of some kinds of agriculture. Finally, at about 5pm, we reach Maiduguri (Nigeria) where we stay for the night. The Americans have built good quarters for their air personnel, and we find comfortable berths and even facilities for the use of our electric razors. The dinner served in the mess consisted of about five courses served by natives and it was surprisingly good.

**Saturday 12th December.** We are up very early and are in the air before dawn and proceed to Fort Lamy [now Ndjamena], which is in French Equatorial Africa and is close to Lake Chad. For the most part the journey is over desert, although a range of mountains is crossed and we get some bumping about when going over them. Here and there native villages come into view with their quaint protecting mud walls. Fort Lamy is noted as the pushing off point for the big game excursions into the Lake Chad regions, and I understand scenes from the *Beau Geste* films were photographed there. The natives seemed thin and emaciated, but hundreds of them get employment at the aerodrome and we saw them being signed on for the day’s work.

From Fort Lamy we go on to Genina [El Geneina, Sudan] and then to another place called El Fashar and finally to Khartoum [in the Sudan] or Wadi Senina (which is the airport, some 20 miles from Khartoum). The calling at these places is described by the pilot of the DC3 (a fine American plane) as the “milk round”. We cross the Blue Nile just above the junction of the two Niles at Khartoum and we by-pass this noted city. I am anxious to find out if Marjorie Henry (my sister-in-law, who lives here) is now at Khartoum, but find after a bit of telephoning that she is still in South Africa with the children. However I locate her husband Alan, and arrange to meet him. We go to Khartoum after dinner in a bus filled with troops. The route takes us past Omdurman, which is now largely occupied by the Sudanese natives - queerly robed in white flowing gowns.

I meet my brother-in-law Alan Henry at the Grand Hotel and get all the news of Marje, the children and also Isabel Gordon. I am able to phone Isabel who is at Port Sudan (500 miles away) and have a long talk with her. She is to be married on the 26th January next. Neither she nor Alan knew of my appointment and were both very surprised to learn of it. It appears mail is very long in reaching Africa - months in fact. I am told that Jim Steele (now Major-General) is in Cairo. Alan takes us to his house, which is a nice comfortable one, and we talk until it is time for us to return by bus to the camp at 11pm.
Sunday 13th December. Up at 3.30am as we are scheduled to leave at 5. We succeed in doing so and now move on towards Cairo. I was sorry to have no chance of seeing Khartoum in the daylight. We cross the real Sahara now with its hundreds of miles of sand - an uninviting picture to be sure. At times great outcrops of rock thrust themselves out of the sandy desert wastes. At last we see the fertile banks of the Nile and for miles the banks of this river are lined with strips of cultivated land, the various greens sharply contrasting to the brownness of the desert sands.

At 11am we approach Cairo and its size is at once evident. We are met by the secretary of Mr R.G. Casey [British Minister of State in the Middle East] and taken through Cairo itself to his residence, out by the famous pyramids. Both Mr and Mrs Casey are away, but they have generously placed their home at our use. It is a magnificent mansion belonging to some wealthy Englishman who used to come out to Egypt to escape the English winter. On my car trip through this city I was led to the conclusion that it must be the most amazing city in the world. It appears to live up to the reputation which many Australian soldiers have for many years given it. As Heydon and I were rather tired after a week in the plane, we decided to rest and defer our sightseeing.

Monday 14th December. The pyramids being close to where we are staying, we made them our first point of visit. We dispensed with the persistent and objectionable guides that tried to give us all the history of these amazing structures. The pyramids defy description and one can only say that they justify being regarded as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. How the stones, many of which are 15 by 6 by 6 feet, and weigh many tons, were ever handled and placed in position makes interesting speculation. The design and construction of these wonderful things is the work of genius. We walked round the two large structures and also saw the inscrutable sphinx. We met a number of Aussie soldiers who also were on a tour of inspection.

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22 Bill and Peter have met up with Keith Officer, who was staying at Casey’s house. Heydon and Officer had both worked in the Australian Legation in Washington when Casey was the Australian Minister to the USA in 1940.
I go to General Headquarters and see [my brother-in-law] Jim Steele, who is a Major-General and well at the top of the military structure here\(^{23}\). He takes me to lunch at the Turf Club and we have a good talk. He tells me he saw Hugh Gordon in London a couple of months ago just as he (Jim) was leaving to come out here to Egypt.

After lunch I go with Miss Gilrath, who is attached to Mrs Casey’s staff, and Mr Heydon on a tour of some of the shopping centres of my “amazing city”. In narrow streets, along which a car can hardly be driven, there is a medley of humanity and animals that is unbelievable. Petticoat Lane is a mere byroad compared with these bazaars in which almost everything is offered for sale, including gold jewellery and ornaments of exquisite beauty and design. Miss Gilrath takes me to an old merchant, from whom I buy a delightful silver tray to send to Isabel Gordon, who is to be married at Khartoum on the 26\(^{th}\) January. We saw some of the workrooms on floors above the small shops of the bazaar. In these squalid rooms boys from ten years upwards work on leather and silver. Said to be over 200 years old, these places are unbelievably dirty and unhygienic. If ever one got a view of the class structure, one got it in Egypt. On one hand the Pashas, in whose hands the control and ownership of all wealth rests, and on the other the thousands of poverty-stricken Egyptians.

As the afternoon is closing in, we leave the bazaar and go out to visit the “City of the Dead” - one of the most quaint parts of the city. It is a whole village of uninhabited houses to which at certain times the relatives of the dead return, partake of refreshments and hold communion with the spirits of their departed dead.

At night we have a dinner party at the residence. It is very interesting and among the guests are Jim Steele, a Dr Garrice (an elderly Australian woman doctor who is most interesting in her knowledge of the Middle East), a Mr Downes (a US press representative who leaves for Russia this week), and Colonel Money, an Australian AAMC officer. We all had an interesting talk. These dinners which start at 9pm are rather hard to take.

**Tuesday 15\(^{th}\) December.** A little more sightseeing and we see one of the Moslem mosques - interesting, impressive and very old. We then go up to the famous citadel, built 1000 years ago and apparently a great fortification. It occupies a commanding position and the mosque is very

\(^{23}\) Steele was appointed deputy Chief of Staff, Middle East Command in October 1942.
beautiful with its amazing alabaster work.

I lunch again with Jim Steele. After lunch Dr Garrice takes me to the pyramids, where I see the inner chambers which were supposed to contain the tombs of Cheops. The red granite chambers of these tombs are a masterpiece of engineering skill. The tombs were supposed to be secret but the Arabs forced an entrance.

**Wednesday 16th December.** I leave by plane at 8am for Jerusalem and I think the trip there was the most interesting I have had since I left Australia. At first we go over the Nile and see the rich fertile lands that adjoin its banks. Then we pass to the delta and on to the Mediterranean, which I see for the first time in my life. Port Said is shortly reached and we go down for half an hour. Up in the air again and we cross the Suez Canal and then hug the coast for 100 miles. Between the sea and the fertile plains are stretches of sand planted with orange groves, which appeared to be thriving. The plains beyond the sand dunes appear to be rich and well cultivated.

In an hour we were over Tel Aviv and it shone out in the bright sunshine. At Tel Aviv we turned landwards and there I saw the rich chocolate soils on which orderly and well-tilled orange groves appeared. We landed at Lydda, where I was met by Pat Gorman’s friend Colonel McDonnell and he made me feel very much at home.

Started then on the 40-mile drive to Jerusalem over country every yard of which is steeped in biblical history and lore. Passed Arab farms (rather poor and primitive) and through Arab villages. There I got a glimpse of what the Colonel and I agreed was one of the seeming insoluble problems of the world - the conflict between Arab and Jew and the struggle, as it were, for Palestine²⁴. It was an interesting drive and I enjoyed every minute of it.

²⁴ The problem was the return of Jews in large numbers to Palestine, a land held by the Jews thousands of years before, but since then in Arab hands.
At last the Holy City came into view with its setting in the hills. I was put up at the Australian Soldiers’ Hotel (the Fast Hotel) and was quickly made at home. I met one of the Land Commissioners who is attempting to implement a Torrens System\textsuperscript{25}, under which there is no freehold - it is all perpetual leasehold. There is no disposition by will, but transfers intra parties are allowable. Transmission is in accordance with religious rules of succession. If there is non-use of land for three years, it reverts to the administration.

After lunch a Mr Roach, who is a high official, gives me the whole afternoon. He takes me through the sacred Churches where the site of the cross is supposed to have been, as well as the tomb of the Master. We see the Moslem Mosque and the famous wailing wall, against which the quaintest collection of Jews were performing [their rituals]. We also passed alongside the wall of the city (which is still well preserved) then went down narrow streets about nine feet wide with small shops on each side, from which all manner of foodstuffs were sold. Donkeys, goats and sheep with their medley of owners passed along the thoroughfare, the smell of which was overpowering.

Before dinner I go out and see the secretary to the Government Minister and perform my duty of placing my name in the book. After dinner I have a welcome visit from Bill Haworth, member for Albert Park, and we talk until midnight.

**Thursday 17\textsuperscript{th} December.** I go to Gaza where I have lunch with General [Sir Leslie] Morshead, GOC of the 8\textsuperscript{th} division which has done so brilliantly in the recent Libyan battle. I am struck by his vigour and capacity to lead and consider him to be an efficient commander. I told him of the suggestion about a military mission to Moscow and he was greatly interested and will be prepared to co-operate.

Afterwards I visited the 7\textsuperscript{th} Australian General Hospital, which has 1500 beds. Our medical people give the impression of quiet efficiency. Bill Haworth comes back with me and we have a pleasant dinner at the famous King David Hotel, after which we hear the Palestinian orchestra in a beautiful concert.

**Friday 18\textsuperscript{th} December.** I start off at 7.30am for a tour of the Jewish agricultural colonies which are spread out through Palestine. The first colony visited is a co-operative consisting of about 50 farmers. Each has

\textsuperscript{25} Named after Sir Robert Torrens, SA Premier, who instituted the system in 1857.
a small area of about 20 acres and produces milk, eggs and fruit. The types of cattle are Friesians and the fowls leghorns. At this village we inspected a girls’ agricultural college where girls between the ages of 15 and 18 receive general instruction in farming work to equip them as settlers’ wives. The college itself and the work were commendable.

We passed through a most fertile valley and saw more colonies, each of which was highly organised and run upon communal lines. The efficiency of these farms is notable. The use of tractors and large implements, contrasted strongly with the primitive planting of the Arab farmers using (as I saw) the wooden plough drawn by the camel, donkey or small oxen, as they were driven hundreds of years ago. The creches and schools on the community farms were of high standard. It was a singular commentary upon the struggle between Jew and Arab to see large and imposing police barracks plentifully erected throughout the country and the strongposts at all the Jewish settlements - concrete pillboxes equipped with telephone communications and strongly guarded at night.

On some of the farms, fish ponds covering hundreds of acres exist and gross revenue from these ponds amounts to £20,000 [now $880,000] a year, so it is a profitable side line. On one of the collectives we saw a well organised and efficient canning plant for fruits and vegetables. This farm was up in the heart of the Jordan Valley where the summer temperature is very high, going to 120°F at times. We finished our inspection of the colonies at a settlement on the Sea of Tiberius or Galilee. This settlement also is very good and its school, Museum of Natural History and library were of high standard. Whilst there, we met leaders of the Jewish movement including one person who has played a big part in the Jewish Labour movement. It was now after 6 o’clock and we had a three-hour drive back to Jerusalem, but the day’s inspection has been notable.

**Saturday 19th December.** Mr Kisoliev takes me out to the Dead Sea where I inspect the Potash works, which are partly owned by the British Government. The deposits of the Dead Sea are, by chemical processes, extruded and made up into four types: crude salt, magnesium salt, potassium salt and potash. Bromide is also produced. Jewish and Arab labour is used. I take advantage of a swim in the extraordinary waters in which it is impossible to sink. One has to be careful not to get any of the water in one’s eyes as it stings considerably.

I lunch with the Governor [of Palestine], Sir Harold McMichael, and
after lunch we walk around the pleasant grounds. He puts his position to me with considerable frankness and indicates a pro-Arab view.

Afterwards I inspect the Hundassah Hospital - organised and paid for by Jewish women in the USA. It is a fine, clean and efficient hospital and opens its doors to Jews and Arabs alike. I also inspect the 1914-1918 War Cemetery, which is kept in splendid condition. I go with Colonel McDonnell to have a talk to the Principal of the Arab College. He is a cultured, tolerant man - keen on the education and uplift of the Arab people and he puts the Arab position to me with moderation but good effect.

Afterwards I meet a leading Arab lawyer, Mr Mogannam. He puts the Arab case with greater vigour and feeling than anyone else to whom I have spoken and indicates the danger of further Jewish immigration. I see the prospects of great trouble in the future - it appears to me to be another of the world’s insoluble problems.

**Sunday 20th December.** The weather is still very kind to me - it is a bright sunny day for my trip to Trans Jordan with Colonel McDonnell. Before we arrive at Jericho, we see a unique orthodox Greek Monastery built in the side of a great cliff. Jericho is now a typical Arab village. Over the Jordan River, which looked just like our Yarra at Heidelberg, and we are in Trans Jordan, a scenic independent Arab state. We rise from below sea level at the Dead Sea to some 4000 feet and see patches of reasonably good agricultural land still tilled by the Arabs by primitive methods - scratching of the surface by wooden ploughs. We pass through an interesting village called Salt and then a village which formed part of an early Turkish settlement scheme. Land improves on the plateau and is capable, I think, of considerable agricultural expansion.

Finally we reach the Arab capital of Amman where the Emir Abdullah reigns. We see the British resident officer, a Mr Foot, whose brother Michael Foot was joint author of *Guilty Men*. The village was in fete, as it was the Arab festival date, and old and young Arabs paraded through the narrow streets. After lunch we went east to see some of the lands of the plains, which were as good as any I have seen, and I was not surprised to learn that good wheat yields are returned from these stony limestone plains.

I was honoured greatly by being given a dinner party by my good host and friend Colonel McDonnell at the Fast Hotel. He invited a couple of high Government officials and their wives and several military officers
from the 9th Division at Gaza. Altogether it was a pleasant evening and I greatly appreciated it.

**Monday 21st December.** I leave Jerusalem at 7am in order to catch the plane for Teheran. We leave Lydda at 9 and pass over rather uninteresting country all the way to the airport at Baghdad. This airport was the scene of a fierce battle with Iraqi rebels a year or so ago. It stands on a pretty lake, which was sparkling and blue under a cloudless sky. We certainly had a delightful day for flying. After a short pause for refuelling, we proceeded on our way to Teheran and had to climb the mountains, the tops of which were snow-clad. These mountains are over 10,000 feet in height so we had to go to about 14,000 feet.

We reach Teheran at 3.15 with the pleasant weather continuing. Teheran is the capital of Persia [Iran] and has a population of about 500,000. We all stay at the British Legation, which is a sort of Palace standing in a large square compound and housing, in addition to the legation, a number of officials. In spring and summer I should imagine the place to be very attractive.

We meet the British minister, Sir Aldous Ballard, who reminded me at once of the late Sir John Thackery in physical appearance as well as mental qualities. We are made very comfortable in the Legation. I go with the Minister to see the Russian Ambassador and we have a friendly informal talk. He was keeping a plane back for us for a day but thought, as it had a number of American Military people on it, it should go tomorrow. He said we should get away in a few days’ time, probably before the end of the week.

**Tuesday 22nd December.** Another bright but cold day. I go with the Minister to see the American Ambassador and have an informal talk about which there is nothing to report. The Minister tenders a luncheon, at which the Russian ambassador and his wife are present. I sit next to him with a representative of the Norwegian Legation who is stationed at Kuibyshev and who only came here yesterday. He gives me some tips and said, reassuringly, that when he left Kuibyshev only two days ago the temperature was 25° below zero.

I go for a walk with Peter Heydon around some of the streets - vendors of almost all kinds of wares walk the streets calling out what they have to sell. A quiet dinner at night with only the Minister, Heydon and me present. Our talk after dinner indicated the attitude of the Minister towards Russia. He is not too sympathetic and expresses a number of the orthodox objections to the regime.
**Wednesday 23rd December.** At breakfast the Minister and I discuss the Russian trials\(^\text{26}\). He holds the view that they affronted principles of British justice. I rejoined that Joseph Davies’ view was in conflict with this theory and that Davies had been in the position of giving a sound judgement, having regard to his legal qualifications.

It is a glorious sunny day and I go for a walk. A high range of mountains, only 15 miles to the north of the town, was snow-capped and glistened sparklingly under the bright sun. I wandered around the city a couple of blocks and saw wretched, bedraggled vendors of hot beetroots, eggs, peculiar whitish butter and equally peculiar bread, selling their wares as they walked around. I never saw many customers approach. There are some good shops with fine Persian carpets and silverware I would like to buy and take home, but it is out of the question.

I return to the Legation and engage in a long talk with the Minister. He speaks in reproachful terms of Persia whose crowning vice, he says, is corruption, practised from top to bottom of the State - from the Shah down to the most junior public servant. The country is obviously most backward and I don’t think any cure lies from any imperial medicine. Perhaps our friends just over the northern border see visions of a new Persia, as all of Lenin’s concepts of the pre-revolutionary condition of a state exist here - namely a backward, oppressed and hopeless people and a corrupt and inefficient government.

I have a very interesting afternoon. First an interview with the Prime Minister who, in physical appearance, reminded me greatly of Victoria’s Premier Dunstan; fleshy, phlegmatic and cunning. As he was unable to speak English, nor I Persian or French, I was unable to form any opinion of his mental power. He told me, through the British Minister who spoke to him in French, that their Parliament consisted of about 145 members and was constantly in session. As to its effect as a real parliament, I was unable to determine. We saw some notable portraits of old European Monarchs in one of the Ante rooms.

\(^{26}\) Stalin’s “show trials” in which numerous elderly Bolsheviks were tried for treason.
We next called on the Shah of Persia\textsuperscript{27}, an alert young man of 23 years. I saw him at the palace which is of modern construction and highly ornate, white marble playing a big part in the building scheme. He conversed with us in English, which was good, and he showed much intelligence and a wide knowledge of current problems and war activities on all the fronts.

He was also able to refer to recent broadcast statements of Australia’s War Minister, Frank Forde, whose name he knew. He didn’t seem to feel any fear about Russia’s attitude towards his country and rather surprised me by saying that, unless his country achieved many social reforms, they could expect trouble from or through Russia. It was to me an encouraging point of view, as there is a tremendous need for a changed social order in this country. It’s people stand condemned to perpetual servitude and poverty as things are at present.

After this interesting interview I went to a late afternoon party given by the Minister at the Legation. He had invited a number of British soldiers who are stationed here, and I had talks to various ones of them. We went to a buffet supper as guests of one of the Legation officials. It was mainly to meet Maurice Hondus, the writer on many Russian matters including \textit{Humanity Uprooted, Red Blood}, etc, etc. The minister and I must have had a two-hour talk with Hondus, who has only just returned from Russia after a seven-month stay there. He is now on his way back to the USA to publish further books about Russia. He knows the country, its people, its life and its war efforts intimately and was able to point out a number of important things. Firstly, he avers that if there is no effective second front in Europe next Spring or Summer, the Russians will believe that the failure to make such a front will be motivated by political and not military considerations. This will make relations between Russia and Britain and the USA extremely difficult. He points out that, after all, Russian’s contribution in the war effort has been of gigantic proportions, with four million men killed. Another very interesting thing he told us was Russia’s appreciation of English Literature. Most of the best English and American authors’ works have been re-printed in Russian and are all widely read. Dickens, Shakespeare, Byron and Jack London appear to be the favourite authors.

\textsuperscript{27}Mohammed Reza Pahlavi was Shah from 1941 to 1979, when he was deposed in the Iranian Revolution. He died in 1980.
Thursday 24th December. Still another cold but not unpleasant day. At 11 o’clock we visit the museum. It has some very interesting features, notably the world famous Peacock Throne²⁸ stolen from Dehli in India. The enamel and glass inlay work is wonderful indeed. Another throne is in alabaster and is unique. Carpets, tapestries and china - all of Persian make - also interested us, as did the large throne and anterooms.

We lunch with the Russian Ambassador and his staff of three - there are three of us and the British Minister. Conversation is somewhat difficult because of our inability to speak Russian and his to speak English. However there is a very friendly spirit and the meal is an enjoyable one.

At 5 o’clock the British Minister assembles some of his senior staff and we have an informal talk from Maurice Hondus. It largely follows his talk to me last night and emphasises frankly the importance of the second front and says that great difficulties will arise next year if the front is not established, particularly so far as future relations with Britain and the USA are concerned. Despite the very representative gathering of the Minister’s staff, no serious questioning of Hondus takes place, although I gathered that considerable disagreement was felt in what he said and some of the conclusions he drew.

I attend a small dinner at the Danish Embassy. They are hospitable people and the Danish Ambassador’s wife, having been born in Sydney, felt it fitting that I should be invited to attend with the British Minister. After dinner a large Christmas tree had its candles lighted and presents were handed out all round. To my surprise I was given two nice little gifts: an interesting miniature Australian flag and a little metal clip to hold cigarettes. I enjoyed the evening and the hospitality of these people very much indeed.

Friday 25th December. Christmas Day here in Teheran. It is still fine and cold - about 35°F. I attend church with the Minister. Afterwards we go to the summer residence of the legation in the hills about seven miles out of the town, but it is 700 feet higher than the city. There is only a small party of us (in all about eight) and we enjoy an English Christmas dinner. After dinner we walk up some of the hills and get good views of both the mountains, the tops of which are snow-clad. They are only a few miles away from the city itself.

²⁸ A golden throne stolen from India by Persians in 1739. A reproduction was used by the Shah at his 1941 coronation.
for our legation at Kuibyshev. It is two storied and has 16 rooms, so it should be adequate, but we dare not express an opinion about it until we have seen it. Apparently it is impossible to get furniture and kitchen utensils over there and Mr Officer has been buying a lot of these things here.]

The Minister entertains the whole of his staff (both British and Persian), as well as a number of officers, at a buffet supper and about 150 attend. The large dining room tables groan under the weight of the food upon them and everything goes well. After the supper a dance takes place and I slip away to bed.

**Saturday 26th December.** Boxing Day and when I awake snow is falling (as it continues to do all day), covering the fir and pine trees with a white mantle. If this continues there will be no chance of our leaving on Monday, as it is impossible to fly over the ranges in the snow.

I go for a long walk with Mr Officer and we visit the bazaar, a curious trading centre with quaint brick-domed roofs. All manner of goods are sold in the bazaars, which are narrow little streets greatly thronged by purchasers. Our walk took us to some of the poorer parts of the town where the people looked cold and miserable - living, as one writer has said, in their “medieval dirt and picturesqueness”.

I spend the afternoon writing and reading. I may add that food riots broke out here a few weeks ago. The people were subdued by the bringing in of a regiment of Seaforth Highlanders, the suppression of local newspapers and the imposing of a curfew.

**Sunday 27th December.** A bright sunny day after yesterday’s snow and my hopes rise as to the possibility of getting away tomorrow. I go for another walk to the bazaar with Heydon. In the afternoon the Minister takes us up to the hills again where we have a long walk through snowfields in a bracing atmosphere. I spend most of the evening reading Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*.

**Monday 28th December.** Another quiet day still waiting news of our departure. I go for several walks to get exercise and keep warm.

**Tuesday 29th December.** I hear that Bill and Max are on the plane that will arrive this morning. I am unable to go to the aerodrome to meet them, as I have to report at [the Soviet Travel bureau] Intourist to weigh in with my luggage. Bill and Max arrive at about 12 and recount their experiences since I left them at Miami some three weeks ago. They
were held up more than we were, but otherwise had a good trip through.

I lunch at the American Embassy and meet General [Patrick] Hurley who has just arrived from an extensive two month tour in Russia, much of which was spent in and over the battle areas. He is confident of further Russian successes but doesn’t minimise the German strength, particularly in relation to a ferocious spring offensive. Maurice Hondus is also at the lunch and again discusses with me the second front position. Strangely enough, he knew Tom Shayhill, late of Hamilton, and declared he was a chap of outstanding ability and a great lecturer.

**Wednesday 30th December.** We are told to be ready to depart Teheran and are not sorry to be on our way to the Soviet Union. We are at the aerodrome at 9.30 but, after waiting until 11.30, we are then told that flying conditions up north are not good enough so we dismally return to the legation. Bill and I go and see Walt Disney’s *Fantasia* at an afternoon session.

**Thursday 31st December.** The last day of the year and we wonder if we will be able to get away. It is a bright sunny day of promise and we get to the aerodrome at 9.30. At about 11.30 we are at last in the air - in a Douglas machine in the hands of Soviet airmen. It is a glorious flight up the valley with snow-capped, glistening mountains to the right and left of us. We go through a gap and thus escape climbing over these very high ranges. North of the mountains we are soon to the Caspian Sea and fly over it for a couple of hundred miles. Then we get to marshlands and our aviators perform some of their low flying feats and fly for some miles within 100 feet of the ground - much to Peter’s dismay although I didn’t mind it. I am conscious that now we are in the land of the Soviets and I am looking forward to my experiences.

Soon the hundreds of oil derricks lift their ungainly structures well into the air and we are at Baku after an enjoyable three-hour flight from Teheran. We are met by a woman representative of Intourist and, as Mr Officer speaks French, we are soon on our way to the city, which is 30 miles away. This oil centre is grim and, like all other industrial establishments, rather unprepossessing. We pass through industrial areas right to the city. The Intourist hotel is a splendid one - right on the Sea front - and we are all given special suites of rooms. I have in addition a large and well furnished sitting room and our meals have been brought up to us in this room.

After a little wait we have our first Russian meal brought to us: Caviar (of which I nibble a little as I am not too keen on it); then some raw
smoked ham (which I left well alone, although Mr Officer had some); an enormous plate of soup with macaroni in it (far too fatty and rich for me); and finally some roast beef with macaroni. I was able to eat this last dish and I liked the rye bread with butter and cheese. I finished up with some mandarins. There was also vodka for those who wanted it.

It was 4.30 when we finished our meal and Keith Officer and I then went for a short walk. Unfortunately we were not able to see much of the town as the light was rapidly fading. We walked round the waterfront. There is apparently a good deal of shipping on the Caspian and oil supplies go up north from here. The working folk mainly consisted of women, girls and boys and they had set serious faces. They are definitely a superior type to the Persians who by contrast are too soft. I contented myself with an omelette for supper and retired early.
**Friday 1\textsuperscript{st} January.** New Year’s Day. We arise at 5.30 and leave the hotel for the long drive to the aerodrome. It breaks fine and sunny so our departure seems assured, but it is 9.20 before we leave. We proceed on along the west bank of the Caspian and the flight is most interesting. There is a mountain range ringing this part of the Caspian and I believe it is the Caucasus Ranges. The land gently undulates to the water’s edge and there was evidence of all possible use being made of it, as vast strips were tilled and the young crops were peeping through the brown earth. Here and there fishing villages came into sight and I saw an old walled village, narrow in shape but whose walls went back to the mountain range.

After about two hours’ flight, a great change occurred in the scenery and the pleasant undulations gave way to grey marsh and the bright blue waters of the Caspian turned a brownish yellow as they were frozen. Over this type of frozen land we flew until we came to the delta of the Volga and the mouth of the Volga itself, now one of the world’s immortal streams because of the Soviet heroism at Astrakhan. The boats were frozen in the stream.

We landed at Astrakhan, but shortly were in the air again on our way - our flight from Baku having taken three hours. Our joy at being on our way was cut short by the plane making a descent at the military aerodrome where we waited some time before re-fuelling. This done and then a further wait developed over weather reports, with the daylight drifting away. We settled down in the plane, but then were told by the crew that we were not going on and that conveyances would come and take us to the city of Astrakhan. Our 20 minutes developed into a wait of nearly two hours, but then a contingent came in force - about five to seven men - including the heads of the military and the mayor. They were extremely courteous to us and we were motored to the city. It was unfortunately too dark to see anything of the city but it had the imprint of oldness on it. We were given accommodation in some sort of a building which looked like a hospital, but everything was clean and tidy.

We were all invited out to dinner and the theatre, but I had a headache so preferred to go to bed. Despite this I was brought a large dinner consisting of a hot plate of cabbage soup which, despite my sickness, I
contrived to eat and found it rather appetising. Then followed a plate of beef and rice. I nibbled a little of the rice and then enjoyed some warm stewed apples in a glass. This was followed by a glass of tea, so I didn’t do too bad. I understand from the others that they were given a banquet with caviar and vodka in abundance and then were given seats in a box at the theatre.

**Saturday 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) January.** We are called early and again shown lavish hospitality, as the cars call for us and take us to some little café where we find everything clean and a most inviting breakfast presented. Again, plenty of vodka for those whose tastes desired it. First course chicken and rice, second course an entrée consisting of steak and rice and then hot meat pies plus bread and butter and plenty of glasses of tea. I was struck by the friendship of the people, and the women who waited on us were clean and wholesome types. We left for the aerodrome a little after 8 but again there were delays, as weather reports from the north were not assuring. We sat in the plane as a raw wind was blowing and the temperature was a little below freezing. At 12 o’clock our hopes rose as the crew got back in the plane, warmed up the engines and we were on the last stages of our journey.

As we moved north we got into sunshine and the trip was very pleasant, but we could see the grim figure of winter enclosing the lands and making all forms of life inert. Soon it was as if we were passing over a vast silent white sea and the villages and their small houses were like wee craft. It was an eerie sight to be sure and the stillness of it all emphasised the firmness with which the frost had enchained the land. After a 2¾ hour flight, we were astonished when told that our destination was reached and looking down I saw many aeroplanes and a town snow-covered.

Alighting from the plane I was met by the chief of protocol\(^1\) and [James] Lambert [First Secretary] of the British Embassy, and welcomed to Kuibyshev\(^2\). Snow was several feet thick on the ground and the temperature, I was told, was at zero (32 degrees below freezing point). It was a clear day and I didn’t seem to feel the cold as much as I felt the penetrating winds of Astrakhan earlier in the day.

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1 The Chief of Protocol (or *Chef du Protocol*) is a member of the host country’s Foreign Ministry who welcomes Ambassadors on behalf of the host country and handles the arrangements for the accreditation of Ambassadors, their consuls, dependents and staff.

2 Kuibyshev (called Samara until 1935 and since 1991) had been the location for the
We were driven to the British Embassy and en route I got my first views and impressions of this Soviet city in which are to be my life and movements for the months ahead. I watched the horses pulling sleds, and the gangs of men and women removing snow from the roads and tram tracks. Everyone seems busy and purposeful and I think I will find a great deal to interest me here as well as elsewhere in the Soviet.

**Sunday 3rd January.** A bright sunny day as I walk to the British Embassy for breakfast. After breakfast we inspect the house which has been supplied to us for our Legation. It is an old two-storied house in the main street, the back of which looks out across the Volga. It has central heating and has been done out throughout and looks clean. Mr Officer sets to work to allocate the working and living quarters. My bedroom and sitting room are to be on the top floor looking out across the Volga, with plenty of air and light, and when furnished it should be most comfortable.

[Letter extracts: The Soviet people have agreed to give us the two upper stories of the Legation building, but we are pressing them to let us have a few rooms on the ground floor, as we require a doorman or porter and it is desirable that he should sleep on the ground floor. We are having a rather difficult task in getting furniture. Burobin (which is the Soviet name for the supply department) is trying to get some for us and we brought what we could from Teheran. The British Ambassador is in England, so Officer and I are occupying his cottage, which is a few streets away. We are very comfortable in his house, although we go backwards and forwards to the British Embassy for our meals. As we didn’t want to identify ourselves directly with the British Embassy, we have established our legation temporarily in the Ambassador’s cottage where it is distinct from the offices of the Embassy.]

I go with Lambert of the British Embassy for my first walk and we go up the main street and turn towards the river. It is very pleasant walking and I don’t mind the cold, as it is clear but with no wind blowing. Temperature is about 5°F. They use Centigrade measurements and I have to convert to Fahrenheit. I have lunch at the US Legation. I have another walk and am very impressed with the general youth of the people and the ruddy good health everyone seems to enjoy. The young boys on their skates seem to embody vigour and vitality as they skate all over the place.
As the Barber of Seville is being played in the evening, Mr Officer, Heydon and I go to the theatre. It is a beautiful building; much better than any we have in Australia. The house is packed with mainly young people, with girls and young women predominating. The orchestra is good and the famous overture gives promise of an impressive performance, which is realised. It is given in Russian so I am unable to understand the words, but I am nevertheless delighted with the melody as well as the acting. At the intervals you go out in the vast vestibules and promenade around and at the end of the acts the young folk move down to the stage and with persistent enthusiasm bring the actors back on to the stage time after time.

As the Ambassador’s residence is only about three minutes away from the theatre it doesn’t take us long to get home. I am unable to get to grips with my work until certain formalities are completed and the Chef du Protocol gives guidance and directions on these matters. The present chef is Monsieur Kochakov the [Russian] Ambassador [to Poland].

**Monday 4th January.** Another bright sunny day with a cloudless sky and temperature reported to be about 5 to 9°F. I go with Heydon to the State Bank to open our account. We also try to get our photos taken, as they are required for our identity cards, but the photographer was away. Mr Officer calls on the Chef du Protocol to discuss formal matters and for my primary interview with the representative of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. At 3.30 I call by appointment on Monsieur Lozovsky, who is acting in the absence of Monsieur Vyshinsky, who is in Moscow. Lozovsky speaks English fairly well and although his woman secretary is able to interpret, her services were but little used. I found his knowledge of Australia and its war activities fairly wide. He wanted to know if the arid interior offered any prospect of settlement. He said our low population would always be a danger to us whilst the Pacific was unsettled. He expressed pleasure that the Soviet armies were doing so well and had no doubt as to the utter and complete defeat of Germany. He also promised to facilitate my visit to Moscow to present my letters of credence. Finally he gave me a small Soviet journal published in English.

**Tuesday 5th January.** Sun again shining brightly, with temperature still about 5°F. Nothing much yet to do. We have our photographs taken for our identity certificates. I go for very long walks to see the city, and am impressed with the types of people one sees - good, kindly, friendly faces and all purposeful. In such a climate as this there is no wonder they are vital. Women work with men breaking the ice from roads and
Russia, 1943

streets. It is done by crowbars and then shovelled off into heaps with wooden shovels. Sleds are universally used and transport is thus made easy. Movements of Soviet forces are very encouraging and must be increasing the seemingly high morale of the people generally.

**Wednesday 6th January.** Weather still fine but more cloudy than previous days. Temperature a little higher - about 9°F. I still have nothing to do so go for a long walk across the frozen Volga. The stream is more than half a mile wide and has been frozen in a peculiar way, as wavy serrations appear rising to four feet in height. It appears as if the freeze occurred instantaneously. The waves of frozen ice run, not down the stream as with the current, but crosswise. Still no word of my visit to Moscow.

**Thursday 7th January.** Word is now received that we are to leave for Moscow tonight in order to present our letter of credentials. Snow falls today for the first time since we’ve been here. My walks are somewhat restricted because of the snow, but walking in it I find very exhilarating. We proceed to the railway station at about 11pm and get in our sleeper (Mr Officer and I). I go off to sleep and have no idea what time we leave Kuibyshev. It is 9.30 before I wake and we are then well on with the journey.

**Friday 8th January.** Sleepers are reasonably heated and not so uncomfortable in this regard as are all the US trains. Two berths are in the sleeper - a transverse lower and parallel upper. As the food position is critical, we are required to bring our rations for the trip both forward and return. Rations are on military lines too and consist of bread, butter, honey, tea and a few tins of meat, etc. The whole of the country through which we pass is snow covered. Here and there we come to forest areas - mainly fir and silver birch. A tracery of the birches is glorious.

A few random notes on the railways: much is duplicated [ie; two tracks] and has electric signal systems. Evidently it carries vast amount of traffic, as seen by the number of stops and length of time at such stops. I should say the speed of our train is on the low side - at best 35 miles per hour but average about 30 or less. It is reasonably comfortable but sometimes there are great jerks when pulling up. I was amused at what was apparently the railwaymen’s adornment of the hammer and sickle ensign, as on most of the railway trucks were the letters CCCP (USSR Railways) with the hammer and sickle below, and below that a further large wrench and hammer.

**Saturday 9th January.** Still on our journey. The lights were not
functioning in the sleeper last night, so I was in the berth at 9pm and stayed there until 9am. The country remains flat and here and there are some traces of forest. Great activity on the railway system with women doing a variety of jobs - clearing snow, signalling etc. Within 200 miles of Moscow there is evidence of grain production on a large scale - we pass an enormous silo, bigger than anything I have seen elsewhere. The outer suburbs of Moscow are very much like those of other large cities and nice homes stand in the grounds studded with trees. It is just dusk when we reach the city and one is unable to see anything.

[Herbert] Baggallay of the British Embassy is there to meet us and John Fisher and Miss [Irene] Saxby are also there. We are put up at the National Hotel, a very large hotel immediately opposite Red Square and the Kremlin. I am given a very lavish suite which I am told was last occupied by [Lord] Beaverbrook. [Stafford] Cripps and [Anthony] Eden have also occupied it, so the shadows of great men will haunt me. The furnishings are of the Napoleonic period and are supposed to be very good. A large polar bear skin occupies part of the floor and a grand piano is thrown in for good measure. The suite, to me, is cold and cheerless and I would much rather have the comfort and homeliness of the Ambassador’s cottage at Kuibyshev. There is no hot water available and I understand the rule is that only one night a week is hot bath night. The fuel position is apparently acute. I am invited to dine with Baggallay at the British legation headquarters and we meet the members of the British Military Mission there.

Sunday 10th January. It is dark until after 8am and when I pull the heavy blackout curtains from my windows, I get my first glimpse of the Kremlin, Red Square and St Basil’s famous church and, in strange contrast, the very large new Moscow Hotel. What a wealth of history it all means and what a significant history. Snow covers the minarets of the churches and I recall the quotation I read from Bob Miller’s letter to me.

After breakfast I meet Miss Saxby and the Fishers who are all, I am glad to say, coming on the staff. Miss Saxby tells me of the almost unendurably hard time that Moscow citizens have had with no butter, no sugar and no meat. I suppose their sacrifices have no counterpart in

3 The British had a legation (often referred to by Bill as an Embassy) in Moscow. It seems that an increasing amount of embassy work was being carried out in Moscow at this time.
any part of the world except perhaps China.

[Letter extracts: John Fisher is a dour type, not unlike his father Andy Fisher [former Australian PM, see 14/12/1917] - his wife seems a bright capable woman and, as she had a very good reputation at Canberra, I think she will be of great use to us as a general typist and stenographer. Miss Saxby is about 45 and is a graduate in Arts from Sydney University. She looks very poor and miserable and it is apparent that life has been very hard for her but, out of a sense of loyalty to friends who have been good to her, she has remained in Moscow. I believe they are all dubious about going to Kuibyshev and want to remain at Moscow, but it is impossible for them to make conditions.]

I spend most of the day with the Fishers and go with them for my first walk. First to Red Square and the Kremlin - what history has been made here. We walk to the Moscow River, which is frozen hard, and then return to the Metro, where we travel on Moscow’s underground railway. It appears to be a good system and certainly conveys many people, as all the trains were crowded. The Russian smell was very obvious, but that is nothing when one considers the conditions under which life is being lived here these days in a vast city of nearly four million people. I lunch with the Fishers at their hotel, the Metropole, which houses all the Press representatives and I meet [Henry] Cassidy, (to whom Stalin has given his recent most famous letters on the second front issue), then representatives of the London Times and Reuters News Agency. A number of the press including Blunden (the Australian representative) are on a visit to the front. The Fishers came back to my hotel where we have tea.

After tea Mr Officer and I visit the theatre to see our first ballet Vain Expectations; it starts at 6.30 and finishes before 9pm. The ballerina is Tupinischtay, probably one of the finest in the world. I hadn’t seen ballet in Australia - this was my first experience - but I will not have to acquire a taste for it, I think. Both the music and the dancing are exquisite. I enjoyed every minute of it and am looking forward to becoming quite a devotee. The theatre was packed to capacity and the enthusiasm of the young folk, particularly the girls, was very keen. It made a tragic reflection to think of the joy and sparkle and the gaiety of the ballet and to remember that over a long 2000-mile front hundreds of young lives had been, were being and would be blasted to pieces.

**Monday 11th January.** I go for a long walk with John Fisher. We had hoped to see some of the museums but found they were all closed. Our
walk is a desultory one as we see some of the older parts of the city. We also look in at a small post office and see that the entire staff, about ten in number, are all young women. We then visit a shop, the showcases of which were unhappily all empty. There were, strangely enough, lots of jars of strawberry jam, but nothing can be bought without the essential ration tickets. It is obvious that everyone is on the same ration basis and money is therefore of no value, as you are unable to go into a cafe and buy a meal in addition to drawing your ordinary meagre rations. In this way the system differs markedly from other countries - here there is real equality of sacrifice and life is very tough indeed.

I go to lunch with Colonel Hugo of the Military Mission. He has a very comfortable flat, which was previously occupied by the Italians. After the frigidity of my suite at the National I enjoyed the warmth and comfort of the Colonel’s house. I met an interesting RAMC officer who had just come down from Archangel where he has been stationed for 13 months. He has found the Russians very friendly up there and has managed to get through a lot of the reserve. He also takes a radical view of things and agrees that the regime has done a wonderful job, although his chief criticism against it is that it has largely impaired initiative, a view I don’t share altogether with him.

Mr Officer and I dine at night with Admiral [Geoffrey] Miles, the leader of the British Military Mission here. General discussion but nothing worth recording.

**Tuesday 12th January.** A fairly bright sunny day but still very cold. I go with John Fisher to have a look at the Lenin Museum - a truly wonderful place with a very full and depictive view of this Russian genius. Rooms are set aside for the different periods of his revolutionary activity and there are photos, letters, papers, pamphlets and paintings of his struggles and his career. In an impressive though sombre chamber, with very dim lights and red drapings throughout and with an array of revolutionary banners, is a plaster cast of Lenin’s face and his hands taken after his death. A ray of light is thrown on the face which gives it an extremely life-like appearance. I don’t think another such museum as this exists anywhere in the world. One’s appreciation of it is somewhat impaired without a knowledge of the Russian language. Young girls in uniform, with revolvers at their sides, act as guards.

From the Lenin museum we proceed to the historical museum and, though it is neither as full nor as impressive as the Lenin Museum, is
well worth seeing. It gives predominance to Russia’s struggles and the efforts of its great soldiers Nevsky and Frankov.

I have John and Mrs Fisher to lunch with a Russian woman friend who is Geoff Blunden’s secretary. (He is the Australian press representative, from the Daily Telegraph, Sydney). This woman has a son at the front from whom she has not heard for six months. Her husband has been wounded and has undergone 13 operations and has again to return to the line, and she has evacuated her other children and her mother beyond the Urals. She is a revolutionary and extremely confident of victory. She reports good news from the Caucasus with the Germans being driven back. One is isolated here as regards news as there is no paper in English and no wireless.

At a quarter to six the Chef du Protocol comes to the hotel to put me through my paces concerning my introduction to the President Monsieur Kalinin [Soviet Head of State]. It is fixed for 12 noon tomorrow, when I present my letters of credence. At 6 I go with him by car for a primary interview with the commissar of Foreign Affairs, Monsieur Molotov. Our car is very closely scrutinised at the gates of the Kremlin. It is too dark to see much, as only the dim outlines of many buildings meet one’s view. I am ushered into a solid building, go upstairs and finally enter a very large oblong room, at a table at the head of which sat Molotov. He doesn’t speak English and there was a young alert interpreter present. Other than him no one else was present.

We had a general friendly talk for about 15 minutes. He asked me about Australia’s war effort and when I outlined it he said it was very good. He said he hoped Australia would never have the enemy on its soil which Russia had so relentlessly seen and borne. I also indicated our indirect help in the war and the agricultural products we were supplying to Britain which also evoked from him the comment that it was very good and that we must be a military people. I further pointed out the far flung battlefields of the world on which the Australian forces had been or were now fighting. He said the Soviet was interested in Australia and I said that we were deeply interested in his country. He pointed out that if a little more pressure were applied at the moment in Africa, it would correspond with the counter-offensive which the Soviet was so strongly making at the moment. I told him of my intention to give a broadcast to

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4 The Kremlin, set in an old Imperial Palace, was the home of the Central Government of the USSR.
Australia and he said there was no objection to it as far as they were concerned. Our talk then ended and as I left his building a young moon illuminated the heavens sufficiently to throw many of the famous buildings into silhouette.

**Wednesday 13th January.** A colder day with temperature about 4°F. I go for a long walk along Gorky Street. This is a splendidly wide street with good buildings. No trams run along it but trolley buses are used. One large building (I think it might have been a radio station) had an excellent statue on the roof of a woman with one arm upraised holding the hammer and sickle, symbol of the unity of worker and peasant. The other arm was outstretched symbolising, as I pictured it, the new era which the unity of worker and peasant had brought.

At noon I am to present my letters of credence to the President, Monsieur Kalinin, and at about a quarter to twelve the Chef du Protocol comes for us (Mr Officer and myself), but we wait until five to twelve before we move off to the Kremlin. It is twelve sharp when we arrive at the rooms. Going into the Kremlin, we get fleeting glimpses of the interesting buildings that are in the grounds, including the large building which houses the Council of Soviets and the Council of Nationalities (Parliament). Mr Officer and I are ushered into an anteroom and as we enter the President, who is rather old and diminutive in stature, comes in and we march forward to shake hands. In presenting my sealed letters of credence I read a few words to him which are as follows:

*By order of his Majesty the King, my august sovereign I have the honour to present to you the Letters of Credence which accredits me as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary for the Commonwealth of Australia. There is no need to assure you, Mr President, that I am most sensible of the importance of the task which his Majesty has entrusted to me, and that I will do my utmost to fulfil it in such a manner as to place the relations between our two countries on a basis of unshakeable confidence. I feel certain that in its fulfilment I can count on the full co-operation of the Government to which I am accredited.*

I introduced Mr Officer and the President then took me into his room where, other than the interpreter, we were by ourselves. A little later Monsieur Dekanosov [?], a deputy commissar of foreign affairs, came in. It was somewhat difficult at first to make conversation with the President, and I tried to open the talk by referring to the distance I had
travelled. He asked me if I felt the cold, which I said I did. He referred to our war effort and said that we had to face a tenacious [Japanese] foe who knew how to fight. He said that his country also faced a terrible and desperate enemy who would still require much fighting before being defeated. He said he had originally come from the Caucasus regions where, at the moment, the fighting was particularly bitter. I understood him to say that some early part of his life had been spent at Vladivostock, and he had then taken an interest in Australia because of its ideals of freedom and liberty and in the battle it was then waging for social progress. He further said he hoped my mission would strengthen not only the bonds of friendship between the countries but would lead to an alliance in matters of culture, art, science and trade. I reciprocated these sentiments and informed him that I had brought with me from Australia letters from societies of workers, scientists and the ACTU. He said he wished my mission success. I may add that he had said in the course of his talk that the Soviet people were friendly and sociable, but that all were now required to subordinate everything for the single purpose of achieving victory. When he and I emerged from his room we were immediately cinephotographed. Altogether my talk with him had lasted 35 minutes.

I returned to the hotel for lunch - meals are very poor here but one cannot complain having regard to conditions generally in Moscow. After lunch I go with Baggallay to see the British war pictures sent out by the Department of Information. Whilst they are good as far as they go, I think a much better and fuller exhibition could be staged. It didn’t seem to me to be nearly as effective as a display of Soviet pictures which I saw many months ago in Melbourne.

On our return from this display we visited the British Embassy which is at present unoccupied. It is in a wonderful position facing the Moscow River and looking right into the Kremlin. It faces the former Grand Palace which now, fittingly enough, is used as a meeting place for the Parliament. I may add in passing that the old Nobles’ Club is used for the housing of the Trade Unions - in other words it is the Trades Hall of Russia.

We go with some members of the staff of the Embassy to see the ballet Swan Lake by Tchaikovsky. It is in three acts and lasts from 6.30 to after 10. Again the Filial [affiliate] Theatre was packed. There is a fine

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5 The Embassy building was unoccupied, but the British had a legation as well.
orchestra of 80 performers and, as I am in the front row, I get a fine view of the work of the orchestra and its leader. The ballet itself is most delightful, with exquisite music. I can see the ballet and the opera bringing me much pleasure. I had not dreamt there was so much beauty in ballet and had never been interested in it in Australia. Afterwards I was much surprised to find that we were to be taken back to the Embassy for supper, which turned out to be a three-course dinner at 10.30pm.

**Thursday 14th January.** Another cold day with temperature about 0°F; yesterday was -2°F. I have my final inoculation against tetanus given me by one of the doctors at the British Military Mission. I have a long talk with the leader of the Mission, Admiral Miles. Briefly this is a summary of his views: The Mission represents the three arms of the services; it is permanent and came out to Moscow on the outbreak of war. There is no effective liaison between it and the Soviet, however they meet in weekly conference. The Soviet discourages any visits to the fronts or to training schools, camps or depots. The leader of the army branch of the Mission has only been to the front on three occasions, and then no more forward than to General Headquarters. Relations between the army branch and the Soviet are not cordial, as many of the Soviets think the British Army has not done much fighting and therefore lacks experience and knowledge. They have some respect for the Navy and more progress has been made with them in this direction, although the Soviets will not give much information regarding the present strength of their Baltic Fleet. Admiral Miles thinks an Australian Military Mission will not get much information and thinks such a mission inadvisable unless some assurances could be given by the Soviet before they come in.

I was shown the actual map position of the front line as it is today and as it was before the recent Soviet advances were made. The first tack of the Germans was extraordinary with the troops in Stalingrad completely isolated, but the line is now 100 miles from this centre. The push back in the Caucasus is also very striking. Admiral Miles is of the opinion (which is not shared by the British War Office or the Soviet leaders) that it is rather a German withdrawal to shorten their line. I hardly agree with his view, but my opinion doesn’t count for much.

I make history for the second time during the week when at 10 minutes to 3am Moscow time (10 to 9pm Eastern Australian Standard Time) I deliver an eight-minute broadcast to Australia. The greatest care is taken by the Soviet Authorities about such broadcasts and mine was
submitted to and passed the censor without a single alteration. Certain minor alterations I made at the last minute were also agreed to. I had the unique experience of hearing the speech immediately after it was given, as two wax recordings of it were made. It is as well that they were, as I understand the reception was so poor in Australia that the [Australian] Broadcasting Commission wired urgently for a repeat, so the record will now do the job for me.

I see Monsieur Socksin [?], the secretary-general of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. He was particularly friendly and I enjoyed a 20-minute talk with him. We talked about Australia and the Soviet and the war position and the future. I think I enjoyed my talk with him more than with any other official.

Although I felt some reaction from the inoculation, I persisted unwisely in going to the opera at night when the Queen of Spades was performed. Again it was a brilliant performance but I had to leave before the end as I began to fear a rising temperature.

**Friday 15th January.** I still feel the reaction from the inoculation, so stay in bed all the morning and Mr Officer sends for the doctor. He comes and sees me but is unable to take my temperature, as his thermometer will not work. He says I have a racing pulse and possibly a temperature and thinks I should not travel, but I claim I am well enough and decide to go on, as staying in the hotel with its coldness, lack of comfort and complete isolation would only make me miserable. We leave at 1.30pm on our return to Kuibyshev and Mrs Fisher and Miss Saxby are on the train also. I wrap myself up well in the carriage and my condition doesn’t worsen, although my arm is still very sore.

**Saturday 16th January.** Still on the train. The carriage is fairly cold so I am glad to have all my warm clothes. I don’t get out of my bunk until nearly 12. I am still improving from the inoculation although the arm is still very sore. The sun shines into our compartment all day and makes the trip rather pleasant. There is a heavy hoar frost and all the trees and shrubs and even the weeds along the line have great beauty - the silver birches are particularly exquisite.

**Sunday 17th January.** I had rather a bad night in the train. I perspired most freely and, as the carriage was rather cold, I took great pains to prevent getting a chill. If ever I was grateful for a rug, I was last night and my kangaroo skin rug was invaluable. In view of my condition, I decide to remain in bed at Kuibyshev, so I am glad to get back to the Ambassador’s cosy cottage. The train journey took 40 hours. Keith
Officer thought it advisable to get a doctor so a Russian Doctor Pavlov (good name) came and overhauled me. He found there was nothing organically wrong and my condition was due entirely to a reaction from the tetanus injection. I am to stay in bed today (and perhaps tomorrow) and the doctor is to return to compress the arm and give me a tonic.

The doctor returns later and places a cold compress on my arm and gives me some powders to take. I ask him to send me his account for his fee but he said there is none - so I get my first and, may I say an effective, illustration of the Soviet’s free medical service. It appears to me to be competent, reliable and of tremendous service to the people.

**Monday 18th January.** Although I feel I am fairly right again, I decide to remain in bed at least part of the day. I have enjoyed many hours of reading and have almost completed a useful, though perhaps elementary, school history of Russia. It is so useful a book that I will try to get a copy. I have also read a number of pamphlets as well as some light reading, so the time has passed very quickly with me.

We are somewhat dismayed by the slowness in getting the legation ready for us and I am to take the matter up with vigour with Vyshinsky when I get about again. The matter is further complicated by the fact that Mrs Fisher and Miss Saxby are obliged to stay at the Grand Hotel and that Bill Duncan and Max Crawford may appear by plane at the end of the week.

[Letter extracts: Poor Bill Duncan and Max Crawford have been marooned at Teheran and now they find that they will not be allowed to escort our furniture up through central Asia, so will be coming up on the plane. In any event I think they would have been more comfortable there than here, where they would probably have been obliged to stay at the Grand Hotel, which apparently lives up to the reputation given to it by Quentin Reynolds in his book *Only the Stars are Neutral*. The Fishers and Miss Saxby are staying there at present and they say there is no bathroom in the entire building which has three floors. The British Ambassador is still away, so we remain in occupation of his cottage, which is very cosy.]

The furniture Mr Officer managed to buy in Moscow may be here at the end of the week and we should also have the supplies promised us by Burobin and those we are to get from the British Embassy. If Burobin has made any progress with the getting of a domestic staff for us by then, we might be able to get the legation opened.

**Tuesday 19th January.** I am glad to be up and about again and after
breakfast I go for a three-quarter hour walk. The day is bright with sun striving to break through cloud formations. It is still intensely cold and armies of women are, with crowbars, chipping the ice from roads and footpaths and then with wooden shovels making mounds of ice which rise up to eight feet at the sides of the roads.

Another Russian doctor (this time a woman) comes to see me to apply ultra-violet ray treatment to my arm. Unfortunately the voltage is not very high and I don’t think (nor does the doctor) that I get any value from the machine. She persists however, saying that she will come tomorrow, although I feel that the arm is pretty well right again. I go for another long walk in the afternoon and fill in the rest of the day in reading and writing.

Wednesday 20th January. I am now up and about and feel well, although under treatment for the arm. The day is bright and sunny although still intensely cold - about 3 or 4°F. I go for good long walks both in the morning and afternoon and settle the drafts of the first dispatches to go back to Australia. The war news in this country is again good and the fall of Schlüsselberg, and with it the relief of Leningrad, must be tremendously encouraging to all the brave Soviet peoples. I was told in Moscow (and have no reason to doubt the story) that privations have been so real in Leningrad that hardly a domestic animal remained. The dogs and cats were freely eaten by a famished but unbeatable people.

I have decided to try and learn some Russian so a woman tutor, who teaches at the British Embassy and who is teaching Peter, tries her hand on me. I start the first stages of a long and arduous trial.

Thursday 21st January. At last I think my life here has purpose, as I have had a fairly full and interesting day. Following my after-breakfast exercise walk (and the day is a little warmer as light snow is falling), I peruse our first dispatches, recording both our activities at Moscow and our primary impressions. I also peruse recent extracts from some of the Soviet papers and am interested in the economic features. They all impress upon the workers, and particularly the farmers and factory workers in Kuibyshev province, the need for greater co-operation and discipline. The party leaders are charged with the responsibility of seeing that a great improvement is effected and all sabotage reported. It appears that even on some of the collective farms the required work and crop results have not been achieved. In the Volzhskova Komminn of the 22nd December 1942 appears this interesting item:
Trial of A Workman Accused of Disorganising Production.

The court at Kuibyshev Province has examined the case of U.P. Orlov, worker of a Kuibyshev plant, who was tried on the charge of disorganising production. Orlov was systematically absent from his work, left off work at any time he saw fit, caused the failure of production programs and a fall in general discipline. He forged a medical certificate releasing him from work for 11 days and later a notification drafting him for military service, by which he attempted to obtain his discharge from the plant. The Court sentenced Orlov to seven years imprisonment.

[Letter extract: I have commenced work which is vital to the whole structure of the diplomatic corps; it is the paying of calls on all the Ambassadors (other than of course the Japanese). I visit them in order of their seniority, starting with the Dean of the Corps. Next week there will be visits to the Norwegian, Swedish, Czech, Belgium and I think one or two more.]

I call on the Afghan Ambassador who is the Dean of the Corps. We had nearly an hour’s talk and ranged over matters concerning our respective countries. I gathered he would be very conservative, as he expresses some fear as to the price Russia may demand if she is victorious in the struggle and, as his is an adjoining country, there may be some basis for his fears. He is also unsympathetic to any solution of the Indian problem (which will give home rule and independence to India) and again feels that his country is safer with the existence of the status quo. We also talked about Iran Islamism but he thinks the Mohammedan people can never become a unity. He spoke a little about the basis of his religion which he claimed didn’t reject Christianity. As we claimed Christ as a prophet, so did they - but they claimed that Mohamed was also a prophet.

After lunch I had my final visit from the Russian doctor, who thinks that my arm is now better (as I certainly do myself). Immediately after his visit I go to the local ice rink for my first lesson in ice-skating. I have a good teacher in one of the general staff at the British Embassy and he is teaching Peter Heydon as well. I think I am very courageous at my age.

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6 The Dean of the Corps, usually the longest serving Ambassador in a country, represents the entire group of Ambassadors in dealing with the host country on issues that affect them all. He also gives information to other Embassies about protocol, local customs, etc.
to attempt to learn, but all my life I have desired it so am embracing this favourable opportunity.

It was incongruous that whilst I was having my first lesson, members of the Japanese Embassy\(^7\) (and I think the minister) were also on the ice. I managed to get through, thanks to my tutor, without any falls. I suppose these are to come when I haven’t his strong arms to rely on.

Adverting again to the economic reports and strictures appearing in *Pravda* and the other papers, it is interesting to observe that in essence they stress the fact that the workers producing consumer commodities should be in the front ranks of those participating in the all-union Socialist emulation, in the same ranks with those producing armaments and ammunition for the Red Army. Complacency, inertia and indiscipline are condemned in the strongest terms.

**Friday 22\(^{nd}\) January.** Another nice day - perhaps the best we have had so far - and I enjoy my walks in the bright sunshine and tramping on the bright fresh snow. Very little snow has fallen since we have been here, but a great deal must have fallen before we came as it lies about everywhere. A very easy day with little to do other than my usual walks, a little reading and some Russian study.

**Saturday 23\(^{rd}\) January.** Another cold although bright and sunny day. The temperature is 4 or 5° below zero Fahrenheit, so one must be well clad when out of doors. I pay another of my diplomatic calls when, with Mr Officer, I see the Persian Ambassador. He spoke in French and we didn’t stay very long with him. He appeared friendly and was certainly most courteous.

I receive a second lesson in skating and may, by the end of the winter, be able to get around. We are gradually getting a staff for the legation and the Fishers and Miss Saxby may move in to the premises within the next few days.

**Sunday 24\(^{th}\) January.** Snow is falling and the weather is cold. One member of the embassy staff said it was -12°F but I will have this checked up as I only made it -4°F. It is impossible for me to have a further skating lesson, so I go for a good walk despite the snow.

At 3pm I go to the Department of Foreign Affairs where I meet Vice Commissar Vyshinsky. I found him to be a warm, friendly person and, through his interpreter, we had a good half-hour’s talk. We spoke on

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\(^7\) The USSR was not at War with the Japanese at this time.
very many general matters including the relations between our respective countries and the desire for a further knowledge and understanding of each other. We discussed agriculture from the point of view of individual and collective schemes and he agreed that I should have an opportunity of seeing some of the collective farms at spring time, so I am looking forward to that. I told him that I had read of his work as prosecutor in the State trials and asked if anything had been published in English which described the legal system and the methods by which it functioned. He said he didn’t think anything had been published in English but that a book recording his own work as prosecutor had been - and that he would see I got a copy. He told me that he had read my broadcast speech to Australia and congratulated me upon it. We both expressed the wish that the relations between our countries would be strengthened in every way.

Monday 25th January. Climatically the worst day since we’ve been here as a strong bitter wind is blowing and the fine snow is blown over everything. The temperature is about -5°F. The bad weather restrains me from taking my usual walk. I pay my call on the Norwegian Ambassador who fortunately occupies a cottage a couple of doors away, so I haven’t to go far in the bad weather. He is a friendly gentlemanly type of man and our talk travels a wide range. He anticipated that I would like something Australian, so first of all offered me an Australian cigarette and then a glass of Australian sherry but I had to offer him two disappointments. He had known Madam Melba very well in Paris and brought out an autograph album with a few of her signatures in it. He summed up the three surprising things of the war as being; firstly the British declaration of war on Germany, secondly the unity of the British Empire and thirdly the tremendous power of resistance on the part of the Russians. I would say that philosophically he was a tolerant, broadminded liberal.

I went at night to a symphony concert at the theatre. It was another Tchaikovsky program of both symphonic orchestral work as well as songs sung by a very gifted Soviet artist. It was a little on the classical side for me, but I enjoyed it all the same. We were fortunate to be taken both to and from the theatre by car, as the weather continued to be extremely bitter.

Tuesday 26th January. Australia Day and I am very far away from it. Had we been settled in our legation I would have given some sort of minor show, as I believe is the diplomatic practice. We are gradually getting things ready to go in. The advance party - the Fishers and Miss
Russia, 1943

Saxby - are now in and report favourably on the warmth and light of the place. A wire today from Teheran told us of the dispatch of our things from there by air and that Bill Duncan and Max Crawford are to leave on Wednesday. It looks as if we might all be together by the end of the month.

I pay another diplomatic call and see the Yugoslav Ambassador. A middle-aged diplomat, he has seen service in a number of places in Europe. He says he is inclined to the Labor point of view and has a good deal of sympathy with the Soviet regime. He also expressed some surprise that some of his colleagues in the diplomatic corps had not been more strongly favourable to the regime.

Stalin’s decree of last night, in which he paid unstinting praise to the Red Army, was very encouraging. He claimed the recent offensives had resulted in capture of 400,000 axis troops, 15,000 vehicles and had penetrated to a depth of 250 miles.

I have another lesson in skating and escape any falls. It is exhilarating exercise on the ice and I hope I can learn to get balance.

**Wednesday 27th January.** A much more pleasant day with some sun and not so much wind. The Norwegian Ambassador repays my call and we have a friendly general talk. I pay a call on the Swedish Ambassador who also is friendly. He is somewhat exercised about the possibility of German threats to his country giving as a reason that Hitler, having so completely failed in his Russian objectives, might want some spectacular coup with which to appease the German people. The Ambassador is distinctly pro-allies and most sympathetic with us. He is also sympathetic (I should say) with the Soviet regime, although he expresses surprise at the attitude of the authorities in virtually closing all doors leading to the getting of any information concerning the country and its economic and war activities. He observed, apropos of the Japanese situation, that the Japanese Ambassador had expressed regret that Japan had gone to war, and wondered where and how it would all end.

I have another lesson on the ice and found the exercise very stimulating as the day was so favourable.

We listened with very great interest to the morning BBC broadcast which told us of the great meeting of Roosevelt and Churchill at Casablanca. It seems to me a very great pity that Stalin couldn’t have attended, as in such an event the effect on the world would have been electric. However I can quite understand his reason for not being able to
go - he has the Supreme Command of the Russian Army, and its activities during these momentous weeks may play a crucial part in the history of the war.

Thursday 28th January. Pleasant sunny day - one of the best we have had. I pay a call on the Belgian Minister and we have a general talk. He says that he has heard that moves are being made at Stockholm to bring about peace between Finland and the Soviet, but I don’t think there is any substance in the rumours. The Afghan Minister repays my call but nothing of importance is discussed by us.

I go for another skating lesson and it is a particularly nice afternoon. I think I overdo the practice a little, as I feel rather tired after my walk home to the cottage. Am afraid I’m not making too much progress, as I am unable to maintain balance yet.

[Letter extracts: We expect to be getting into our new Legation very soon now. The Fishers and Miss Saxby are there now, although they still have their meals at the Grand Hotel which is almost opposite our Legation. A good deal of the furniture has arrived and, although it generally is a rather moth-eaten looking lot, we must remember there is a war on. The actual work of the Legation is now being done in the building, which is satisfactory, as I have wanted to get it established in its own quarters. The British Ambassador is still away, which has been fortunate for us, and there is no word of his early return, although I am anxious to leave and get into our own home.]

Friday 29th January. We receive a wire from Teheran indicating that Bill Duncan and Max Crawford have left, so they should be here tomorrow or Sunday. Today is another bright and sunny day although intensely cold. The Yugoslav Minister repays my call and we talk for about 20 minutes over a cup of tea.

I observe two incidents in the street worth recording. The first is the humorous sight of a small boy enjoying a ride on the rear of a trolley car with a diminutive police traffic woman (who is merely a girl and not much bigger than the delinquent boy) trying to belt his backside with her baton. The next incident is the sight of a battalion of Red Army troops marching along the street. They appeared to be in their twenties and I don’t think had seen active service. They appeared healthy and strong and were like Australians in that they were on the tall side. They were splendidly clad in strong knee-high leather boots, warm caps and good strong and long overcoats. They sang as they marched and altogether made a good impression.
I receive an interesting cable from Dr Evatt relative to the prospects of an Australian Military Mission coming here, and suggesting we should not be deterred by the apparent failure of the British mission. The matter is rather delicate and I fear I will have to visit Moscow and discuss this question (as well as the desire of Australia for the Soviet to rejoin the International Labor Organisation) with Commissar Molotov.

**Sunday 30th January.** Weather still bright and sunny. I spend the whole morning at the Legation in reading dispatches sent to the [Australian] Foreign Office and covering the last nine or ten months. Dispatches from China, USA, Egypt, Iran and USSR are of chief interest and afford a good background to activities and attitudes in each of these countries.

I hear at 1 o’clock that the plane is to come in from Teheran in an hour’s time, so I go out to the aerodrome in one of the embassy cars. Bill Duncan and Max Crawford are due to arrive, hence my interest. The Embassy’s interest is in about 20 bags of mail, as they have had none since we arrived four weeks ago today. I think our car driver took the wrong road to the aerodrome, as we went through a surprisingly active industrial area. It was rather scattered and disjointed but it gave one a picture of the amazing industrialisation that has taken place in this country during the last 20 years, and particularly during the war period. After a wait for more than an hour at the aerodrome we were told that the plane would not arrive today, so with almost frozen feet I got back into the car and we returned to Kuibyshev. Both the Polish and Swedish legations were misled (as were we) and it meant a dead loss of 60 litres of petrol to the British Embassy, as it sent three cars to the aerodrome.

**Sunday 31st January.** Another bright sunny day. I spend all the morning in reading confidential reports and dispatches from the Foreign Office and get a very clear picture of happenings in numerous parts of the world. An interesting dispatch (sent to a country which I will not name) indicated the determination of Great Britain to wage the war until the Axis’ powers were destroyed. This to me was a highly assuring message.

I receive word that Bill and Max are really coming in the plane today, so I go out to the aerodrome and am rewarded by meeting them. After their month in Teheran they both looked well and fit and, after dinner at

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8 Bill must have cabled Evatt after his Jan 14 meeting with Admiral Miles. It seems that Evatt’s enthusiasm for a Military Mission was shared by few others.
the British Embassy, went to occupy their quarters at our own legation.

**Monday 1\(^{st}\) February.** Another bright day but the weather is intensely cold. Max and Bill have settled in well at the Legation and seem quite pleased with their home. We have a long talk on a variety of matters, and their Teheran experiences are put to me.

I visit the Czech Minister and find him politically almost at one with me. He takes the point of view of the Social Democratic party and is a sympathiser with the Soviet regime. He thinks socialism is inevitable after the war, unless the world falls into the abyss of fascism. He seemed very upset about the recent appointment of a Vichy\(^9\) man to the Governor-Generalship of Algiers. He thought it was a political appointment inspired by the American State Department.

**Tuesday 2\(^{nd}\) February.** Another fine bright day. The weather, although very cold, is on the whole bright and endurable provided you are warmly enough clad. I see the counsellor and third secretary of the Chinese Legation and have a very interesting hour’s talk with them. Our talk covered a very wide range indeed, with the war situation predominating. They were most anxious about the Pacific and almost shared our own Prime Minister’s fears, broadcast last week. They do not accept the view that the European war should be settled first and then “we can finish off Japan”. They were anxious to know the implications of the Casablanca talks between Roosevelt and Churchill. They informed me that a neutral colleague had told them that the Casablanca talks had considerably depressed the Japanese Ambassador - who had previously expressed the view that it would be a 50-50 struggle, but now it meant war to the death so far as his country was concerned.

A crown from one of my teeth having broken, I get an appointment with a Soviet dentist who is a woman (elderly) and she appears to be very proficient. She makes a temporary job and says the tooth will require to come out (as no permanent job can be effected) and I am to see her again after I return from Moscow.

**Wednesday 3\(^{rd}\) February.** Another bright day. Temperature still below 0\(^\circ\)F. I go to the legation after breakfast at the British Embassy. I find that the Fishers, Miss Saxby, Bill and Max have had their first meal (breakfast) there. The goods which came up by the Soviet plane from

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\(^9\) Vichy refers to the region in France that was the seat of the French Collaborationist Government under Marshall Pétain from 1940-44.
Teheran have not yet been released, some questions having arisen with the Soviet customs as to their right to open the packages. This action we will resist and will make a protest to Australia, but I am hopeful of securing a way out of the difficulty.

I receive the Belgian Minister on his recall visit to me. General talk but with nothing to report. Discipline is strict in some quarters of the administration here as the following extract from Pravda illustrates:

*The Presidium of the Supreme Council of the RSFSR*\(^{10}\) *has removed A.P. Gushakova from the post of People’s Commissar for Social Insurance of the RSFSR for unsatisfactory work and failure to take measures against those guilty of a heartlessness and bureaucratic attitude to the needs of the families of those in military service.*

**Thursday 4\(^{th}\) February.** Mr Officer and I disagree as to the attitude we should take over the claim of the Soviet Customs to inspect packages for our legation. I am anxious at all costs to prevent any friction, or for any “incident” to arise. It seems, on enquiry, that both the British and US Embassies have seemingly admitted the right, so we are agreeing to the packages being opened under protest. We will report the matter to Australia.

After lunch Bill Duncan and I (with [Thomas] Brimelow of the British Embassy) make a tour of the diplomatic store, the gastronome [food shop] and the free market. I suppose no other tour could illustrate the intensely hard time the Russian people are enduring. In the gastronome, from which we draw our rations (when they are available), the supplies were extremely limited. I saw cigarettes, some German (or rather Russian) sausage, some tea, macaroni and a fair supply of wine. Pricing the latter I found it worked out at about A£2 [$90] a bottle, so I don’t think our mess will buy much of it.

In the diplomatic store there were limited supplies of clothes, some of which we could buy from our coupon issue of 120 which covers a period of six months. Articles bought under cover of coupons were much cheaper than the goods purchasable without coupons. We finally visited the free market - it is really a peasant market which in many respects resembled our Australian markets, excepting that the range of articles offered for sale was very limited indeed and the prices fanciful. Potatoes (very scarce) were offered at 10 shillings [$22] a pound.

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10 Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, the official name for the state of Russia within the USSR.
Carrots were the same price, sunflower seed 60 roubles (£1/4/- [$53] a gross); cabbages 30 roubles a gross (12/-) [$26] Pork 550 roubles a kilo (£5 a pound) [$220], meat (mutton, beef, etc) 23 roubles a kilo (£2 a pound) [$90], milk 60 roubles a quart (£1/4/-) [$53]. As we will be obliged at times to use this market, particularly for potatoes and carrots, I can see our mess accounts soaring to high figures.

It appears that the conclusion one can draw from these prices is that for the bulk of the people a very meagre standard prevails. Although rations are issued to the people, the scarcity of many foodstuffs must mean that most people have simply to go without. Preference in feeding is given, of course under all circumstances, to the Army and to workers in the war industries.

The Czech Minister repaid my call, and I received him in our own legation despite its inadequate furnishings. He is encouraged very greatly about a second front, and thinks that if it could be created now the war would definitely end this year.

It turns intensely cold in the afternoon and I think I feel it more than ever before. Both Brimelow and Bill Duncan share my views about the cold and we nearly perished when looking around the free market. It made me realise how tough the peasants and the stall holders must be.

In the evening I went with Crawford and Fisher to a cinema show which the Soviet Foreign Offices Department frequently turns on for the diplomatic corps. It was singular that in the front row at the right was the Japanese corps. In the centre was Vyshinsky (next to whom I sat) and we Australians occupied the left-hand seats of the front row. The pictures were partly war, partly newsreel, partly historical-cum-propaganda and partly humorous and on the whole were entertaining. During intermission a buffet supper and a cup of tea was served. It gave one a chance of seeing the various members of the corps and the entertainment was almost completely given for our benefit as, apart from a few Soviet officials, no members of the public were present.

Friday 5th February. We are facing a few difficulties in the establishment of the mess, as one of the employees has brought in with him his wife, two children, his mother and a fairly large dog. If they are to go on our rations, it may be awkward; so Bill Duncan has the task of straightening the matter out.

I return the visit of the Chinese and again have an interesting talk. They echo Mr Curtin’s fears about the war in the Pacific and seem to think that the strength of the Japanese is very much underestimated in
Russia, 1943

Later in the day I pay a call on the US Ambassador, Admiral Standley. I had met him a couple of months ago in Washington so we were not strangers. He had just returned from Moscow and had whilst there presented the note from Churchill and Roosevelt to Stalin. He feels strongly that it is a great pity that the three leaders are unable to meet in conference, as vital matters of joint strategy are constantly arising. He also expressed some little regret that the campaign in North West Africa has not proceeded more favourably and attributes some of the delays to political reasons (probably with the French). As to the opening of a second front by Russia against Japan, his opinion was that such a course would be sheer folly in regard to the tasks which have faced the Soviet, and which she has so surprisingly succeeded with. He feels that the diplomatic corps may be back in Moscow in May. He finds it hard to get information upon matters that are of mutual importance to the two countries He instanced rubber, in respect of which a committee had come from the USA, but was not getting much encouragement.

It appears obvious that the old peasant economy in agriculture would not have had the capacity to produce the supplies of food necessary to sustain the armies of the people. Collectivised farming has been an important factor in enabling the Soviet to carry on war and life generally. Apropos of this, I may say that I saw published in Russian an interesting work on soil erosion. Snow, strangely enough, is the greatest contributing factor to this problem, as when it thaws great quantities of water are released and flow into eroded courses.

In a speech by A.S. Litubakov at Moscow on the anniversary of Lenin’s death, he said that a people fighting self-denyingly for their freedom and independence cannot be defeated. Lenin was right in this instance when he said that people who trusted the fonts of freedom created their own power and ability to fight for their great and noble ideas. They will be victors in any struggle no matter how heavy and difficult this struggle may be nor how stubborn and ferocious the enemy.

**Saturday 6th February.** The first rift occurs in the legation’s domestic side. Mr Officer and I sharply disagree on the question of domestic staff and, as the matter may become important, I propose recording the facts. In the first place Mr Officer suggested that I should refrain from concerning myself with staff problems, and I agreed. He then went to Burobin and applied for a domestic staff of four maids. Burobin refused him this number saying that three were adequate, a view with which, I
may add, I agreed. Mr Officer wanted [an additional] maid to be allotted to himself and me, and that we should pay for her, a proposal to which I agreed. But then he wanted to have a maid exclusively for himself and I scented trouble, particularly after what I had heard of these staff troubles in the British Embassy. I then very clearly indicated that I was opposed to his view and that only three maids were to be employed.

I sensed trouble in relation to the staff generally unless the matter was firmly handled and put beyond doubt. I therefore decided to postpone my trip to Moscow and to come at once to the legation and prepare a staff classification with a definition of staff duties; I packed my things at the Ambassador’s cottage and, with Bill and Max, brought them to the legation. I had no sheets or pillow slips for the bed but used large towels for sheets and covered the pillow with a small towel. After tea I drafted out a scheme classifying the domestic staff and rostering the work between the three maids. In this way I am hopeful of preventing strife and dissatisfaction among them.

Letter extracts: At last I am in the legation building. After a dispute with Officer, I saw that I had to take a strong stand and show my authority, so I drew up a classification of domestic staff with a clear definition of their duties. We then had to settle the problem of rations (of the staff), as the rations of these poor wretches consist practically only of bread, so they virtually come on to our limited rations. Officer passed this work and the control of the domestic staff on to Bill. I think it will be found that among the legations we will be the model employers.

The legation building is splendidly warmed - in fact too much so, and we have been compelled to open the outside as well as the inside window ventilators. I propose staying in the legation until all the domestic staff are here and are carrying on their duties, and when that is done I will go to Moscow.

Sunday 7th February. A quiet uneventful day at the legation. It is rest day to the Russians and we observe it at the legation, no work being done. I am still straightening out a scheme for the classification of the domestic staff. I think we will ultimately provide model conditions for them, particularly as to leave and sharing generally of duties.

Monday 8th February. Another quiet and fairly uneventful day. We are gradually getting the staff position at the legation cleared and await the arrival of a cook. She has raised the question of higher wages, which we will concede. We are also most anxious to have a wireless and find that
Burobin can sell us one for 1000 roubles (£20) [$900]. The staff position having been settled, Max and I will go to Moscow on the train at midnight tonight.

**Tuesday 9th February.** Max and I boarded the train at Kuibyshev en route for Moscow at midnight last night and immediately turned into our berths. I slept very well but when I got up at 10.30am I found to my amusement that we were still in the Kuibyshev railway yards. We left at about 11 o’clock and spent a leisurely day in the train which moved forward very slowly.

**Wednesday 10th February.** We find our thermos most useful and we fill it from the samovar at the end of the compartment. We have a cup of tea when we wake up and then remain in our berths until late in the morning. Our train stops at Penza for a very long time and I enjoy a half-hour walk in the bright sunshine. Snow covers everything. We combine breakfast and lunch and are being careful with our limited rations, as our journey is now certain to be longer than we had expected. We have bread and butter with cheese and jam for breakfast/lunch, a cup of tea and bread and jam at 5pm and then the one meal of the day, dinner, at 8pm when we have a small tin of meat, bread and butter and tea. It is satisfying if lacking in variety.

At one of the wayside stations peasant women are selling milk and honey (although I don’t think the land is flowing with it) and their prices are worth recording. For a small bottle of honey (smaller than a tomato sauce bottle) they sought 150 Roubles (£3/15/-) [$165], and for a small glass of milk 10 Roubles (5/-) [$11]. I had several walks at different stations in the cold, dry sunny air and it was welcome after the stuffiness of the carriage. It is little wonder that our journey is so slow, as preference is rightly given to military trains, great numbers of which pass in both directions. It is depressing to see a number of hospital trains among them. I spend an hour playing dominoes with some Russians in the next compartment.

**Thursday 11th February.** Our train is still making slow progress but we don’t seem to mind - today we remained in our berths until 12.30 and this cuts the day down a lot. We still give way to many trains travelling, like us, towards Moscow.

**Friday 12th February.** Still on the train and we only reach Moscow at 1

11 During the Moscow crisis of 1941 the government was relocated to Penza.
o’clock in the afternoon. We manage by great skill to make our rations last us. Unfortunately for us a wire was sent by the British Embassy at Moscow telling us to carry extra rations because of likely train delays, but the wire failed to reach Kuibyshev before we left.

Had a long talk on the train to the Greek Minister [to the USSR], Mr Polites, who was proceeding to Moscow to present his credentials. I found him very logical in his outlook and not unsympathetic to the regime. He claims the three epic features of war were: 1) The Battle of Britain, 2) Greek resistance in holding up the Germans for eight weeks and 3) Russia’s great and continuing successes. His regard for Australian soldiers is very warm; he said they made a name for themselves whilst in Greece.

Geoff Blunden, representative for the Australian newspapers in Moscow, met us at the station and we asked him to lunch with us. After lunch the three of us went for a walk round the Kremlin and we had a general talk. I found Blunden to be a man of gloom who saw no good in Russia and who said that the regime had sold out socialism. Max and I disagreed strongly with him, but we found further argument would only lead to acrimony so we discontinued it.

Later in the afternoon we visited the British Embassy where Baggallay gave us afternoon tea and introduced us to Admiral Miles of the Military Mission and other members of the Embassy staff. A long talk with Ferrier gave me the story of the fixation of the diplomatic exchange rate of 48 roubles to the pound sterling. It appears that about a year or so ago the trade in roubles outside the USSR was very extensive in black market dealings, and the roubles weren’t much higher than 100 to the pound. These dealings prompted the Soviet Government to issue stringent regulations against these transactions and by agreement a diplomatic rate was fixed at 48 Roubles to £1. Despite this regulation, black market dealings in roubles continued and allegations were made that roubles were being sent into Russia, even in the diplomatic bags. The British Embassy then clamped down on these black market dealings and, in order to bring the roubles position of the members of staff somewhat into parity with the black market rate, the British Government agreed to lift the rate from 48 to 100 for members of the British Embassy staff12.

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12 The problem was the rouble was an entirely internal currency; there was no open exchange between it and foreign currencies.
Max and I saw a gifted performance of *La Traviata* at the Filial theatre and enjoyed every moment of it. Max says he has seen no finer performance of this opera anywhere and he has seen it in Paris, Milan and in the USA.

**Saturday 13th February.** Max and I go for a long walk up Gorky Street and admire both the width of the street and the rows of very good buildings. A keen wind is blowing, and the fine snow is whirled about like dust in our Mallee dust storms. I go for another long walk in the afternoon and Max goes to see VOKS\textsuperscript{13}. At night I see *Rose Marie*. It is done very well and, although I miss the dialogue as it is in Russian, I get great entertainment from it. The tenor has a fine voice.

The Russian people appear to be in good condition despite the terrible hardships of their lives. I think they are the strongest people in all the world and their qualities of toughness and endurance are reflected in their soldiers, whose great triumphs continue.

We are handicapped at the hotel by not being able to get any war news.

**Sunday 14th February.** As we are interested in seeing one of the Moscow churches, Max and I get a car and go to a Greek Orthodox Church, which proves to be a most interesting sight. The cathedral is large and, although both externally and internally it could do with much repair, it is a fine representation of Russian 19\textsuperscript{th} century architecture. Inside the church on each side of the large aisle was a number of chapels and these were substantially ornamented with religious paintings and pictures, icons, candelabra and candles. A service was in progress and the building had a large congregation, of whom the greater proportion were women, 45 years and upwards, and they appeared to be of the poorer classes. The singing (which was led) was rather good; the men being on one side and the women on the other. The voices were not blended but sang alternately and to no accompaniment. The service was conducted by the Patriarch clad in his rich vestments. He did no preaching but seemed to be chanting, and from time to time walked to the high altar and there lighted a number of candles. In one of the many chapels, burial services were being conducted for the dead and two corpses were there in unclosed coffins and surrounded by groups of mourners. Both inside and at the doors of the church were beggars, who pleaded for coins. It seems quite apparent that there is little or no hindrance to the exercise of religion. The church we saw is, so we

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\textsuperscript{13} The Soviet Department for cultural exchange with foreign countries.
understand, typical of quite a number in Moscow and throughout the Soviet. It is the power of the church, used in a political sense, that the Soviet has properly destroyed.

Blunden pays us another visit and spends most of the afternoon with us. His ideas are to me in many respects contradictory. He condemns the regime yet says socialism must continue. He and I intensely discuss proposals for immigration to Australia after the war - I contested the wisdom of it until the needs of our own people were completely satisfied.

At 5 o’clock Baggallay from the British Embassy comes to see me and it is evident that he is interested in my visit to Molotov as Mr Officer had already written to him indicating the purpose of my visit. I told him of it and the extent of the facilities we would urge if the visit of the Military Mission from Australia would be agreed to by the Soviet. I also indicated that I proposed asking Molotov that Blunden should receive the same press facilities as are afforded to other press reps. I said that I proposed raising with Molotov the question of my being put into contact with some of their economic advisers, so that I may ultimately discuss questions of post-war trade. Blunden and Baggallay both had afternoon tea with us.

We went at night to a premiere of the ballet - The Slavegirl. Again it was an exquisite production and I think that is the only word by which I can describe it. The scenery was particularly effective, but the entire production was a masterpiece. Gulorpina [?] (the ballerina) gave a fine exhibition of both acting and dancing, as did every member of the cast.

Monday 15th February. I phone Molotchkoff to ascertain if any appointment has yet been made for me to see Molotov. I am informed that no appointment is yet fixed but that I may get one tomorrow. Blunden calls at 10.30 and Max and I go with him for a walk to see the bookshops. We visit the International Book Shop and buy some books and pamphlets which are very cheap, particularly by comparison with Australian prices. We have lunch at the Royal Air Force mess. They have an excellent flat with splendid appointments and furnishings and

14 Two months later, Bill would discuss Officer’s attitude with Evatt, and Evatt would cable Hodgson on April 24: “From what I can gather Officer and Heydon gave so little help to Slater that the case if almost one of sabotage”. It should be noted, however, Evatt’s extreme enthusiasm for the Military Mission and his suspicion of Officer’s association with the conservative Stanley Bruce.
their whole existence is one of comfort and well-being, and made our establishment at Kuibyshev appear very drab and frowzy. Our friends of the RAF are very good to us, as later events will show.

The sun shines gloriously in the afternoon, so Max and I go for our favourite walk round the Kremlin up Red Square and past the Lenin Mausoleum in its bold setting of black and red granite. On we go beyond St Basil’s whose towers and minarets with their snow coverlets look more quaint than ever. Then we go around the eastern wall and along the Moscow River to the northern end and back to the National along the west. A wonderful walk in a perfect setting of bright sunshine, which had already started a thaw.

**Tuesday 16th February.** Max and I spend a couple of hours in the Lenin and historical museums. On our return to the hotel we find that the RAF has treated us with great generosity by sending us a substantial parcel of tinned foods for our return journey to Kuibyshev. Altogether there were 34 tins of food covering a large variety and five Tommy cookers [portable stoves]. We appreciate this happy gesture of friendship very much.

I keep phoning about my appointment with Molotov. With our friend the Greek Minister we go to Colonel Hill’s flat for lunch where we have a pleasant general talk. When I return to the Hotel I find that the appointment with Molotov has been fixed for 6pm. Max and I then go for a long walk, as the weather is very mild and a thaw has again set in. We go up past the magnificent Lenin Library and across the Moscow River, close to where the great Palace of Soviets was to have raised its gigantic figure into the heavens. As we look across the Kremlin its quaint chapels are silhouetted against a soft grey sky. We return along the Moscow River in front of the British Embassy.

At a quarter to six Max and I leave for the Kremlin and, as the light is still good, we get glimpses from the car of the buildings within the Kremlin walls. Punctually at 6 o’clock Max and I are ushered into Molotov’s room. I then quietly put four points seeking the sending of a Military Mission from Australia to the Soviet. I urged that, if the mission were allowed, it should have facilities to see the active fronts and to confer with Soviet officers on strategy and tactics and also inspect training camps and units and also air force units. Molotov interrupts me once or twice by suggesting that, as we are part of the British army forces in the Middle East, the British Mission should function for us. However I think I secure a change in his attitude. His
arguments seemed to follow these lines:

1) The Australian army in the Middle East and the RAAF flyers in Murmansk and in Great Britain were under British control and therefore formed part of the British Army - therefore the British Military Mission should adequately represent Australia in the Soviet. (By the way he commented dryly on the fact that the Mission probably consisted of 100 people). I replied to this by saying that, although it was true that our forces formed part of the British Army and Command, they were under the exclusive command of their own officers. I added that in the Greece, Crete and Syria campaigns, the Australian Commander in Chief was deputy commander of the entire British forces. I further added that, although I had no express authority on the point, I assumed our mission would be a very small one consisting of probably only three members of ranking officers (at present in the Middle East) and would be a visiting and not a standing mission.

2) He said that he thought that, as our battles and engagements had been naval ones, there could be little need for the mission. I corrected this impression by referring to the fact that, although we had lost half of our navy in engagements in various theatres of war, all the major engagements in which Australian troops had taken part were inland battles. These were in the first and second Libyan struggles and in those of Greece, Crete, Syria, Malaya and now New Guinea.

3) He said that, as the whole time and energy of the Soviet officers were directed towards driving the invaders from Soviet soil, they had deliberately refrained from taking visiting parties to the front. In General Hurley’s case (to whose visit I had alluded) he came as the special envoy of the President of the USA, and for that reason had been afforded special facilities.

His ultimate decision was to discuss the matter with his military chiefs and then communicate his decision to me. In reply to my question as to when I might expect to hear from him, he couldn’t say but would communicate with me and, if it became necessary, would see me again. I then said to him that in an unofficial way I would like to see some of their economic advisers in order to try and make some exploration of the question of post-war trade between the two countries. He promised to make the necessary contacts for me through the Bureau of Foreign Trade.

Finally I said that the only Australian press representative, G. Blunden, had complained to me that he didn’t have complete access to the press
facilities. Molotov replied that sometimes it became difficult to provide equal facilities for all the press, but he would make enquiries and would see that Blunden received equal treatment with other press representatives. Our interview lasted 35 minutes and at its conclusion I thanked Molotov for his cordiality and frankness. He said that he was prepared to see me at any time, which I thought was a most favourable attitude to take up with me.

After our interview we went to again to the Filial Theatre where we saw Rigoletto. During one of the intervals we met General [Phillip] Faymonville, the military attaché to the US Embassy, and he invited us to have supper with him at the Embassy after the theatre. Our Greek Minister friend, Polites, was also invited and two other American officers were also there. Faymonville is a genial host and I would say that he was a quiet, competent man. It is said of him that he was one of the few military men who said that Moscow would not be captured by the Germans. They talked about it being a supper, but it was really a banquet a la American. These suppers are no good to me as I cannot get to sleep, and that is Max’s experience also. In the middle of the banquet the phone rang. The General answered it and it was a message advising him that the Soviet Forces had taken Kharkov. We immediately rose to our feet and gave a toast to the gallant and competent Red Army. There was general agreement among us that now was the great moment for audacity and risk on the part of the Allies to push a second front from North Africa or on the Western European coast. No disagreement was expressed by anyone to this and I was glad to see it.

**Wednesday 17th February.** We have a much easier day and go for long walks in the morning and afternoon. There are signs everywhere of the vigour with which Moscow’s great ten-year re-building scheme had been prosecuted until the war called a halt. I think that ultimately it will be one of the finest cities of the world.

Blunden phones me and I tell him of my representations on his behalf with Molotov. Baggallay also calls to see me and I report to him in detail my interview with Molotov. We catch the train for Kuibyshev at about 5.30.

**Thursday 18th February.** On the train which is moving slowly towards Kuibyshev. It is a very long train with more than 30 carriages and trucks. Some of them appear to be pre-revolution rolling stock, which apparently keeps our speed down - I don’t think we travel as much as 20 mph at any time. Still, one has great admiration for the work that is
being done by the railways. We pass the time reading, talking and sleeping.

**Friday 19th February.** Another day on the train spent just as the previous day.

**Saturday 20th February.** Still on the train with various guesses as to the time we will reach Kuibyshev. We ultimately get in at 4 o’clock with Bill Duncan waiting for us at the station. He reports that the legation is running smoothly so far as the domestic side is concerned. I had prepared a telegram and draft dispatch covering my interview with Molotov whist on the train, so it was able to be sent to Australia at once.

I had heard that appointments with high Soviet people are frequently arranged for late hours, so was not surprised to learn that an appointment had been made for me to see Lozovsky at 10pm. I had three matters to see him upon. Firstly, I presented a message from the Prime Minister and the Minister for External Affairs, congratulating the Red Army on its 25th anniversary and the splendour of its fighting. Lozovsky in reply to this message said that the Soviet leaders, soldiers and people would be gratified by such warm messages. I then spoke to him about matters concerning *Salt*, the AIF paper15, but Lozovsky said that so far he has received no communication from the paper but that he will make enquiries. I also put before him the question of the alterations to Soviet military rail gauges16 by the Germans when in possession of Soviet territory. He said this was a technical question upon which he had no knowledge, but he would seek advice from his railway advisers and let me know when he has heard from them. I referred to the interview which Bill Duncan was to have with him on Monday and referred to Bill’s qualifications as a Trade Union man.

**Sunday 21st February.** It is a rest day at the legation, so we do no work and give leave to many of the “town workers” (as the servants are described, and I think rightly so). Bill, Max, Peter Heydon and I all go to the Sunday midday production of the ballet *Swan Lake*. It commences at noon and goes until about 3.30. A study of the audience is most engaging. It consists mainly of workers or worker’s wives and

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15 *Salt* (an acronym of Sea, Air and Land Troops) was a weekly magazine produced by the Australian Army Educational Service and distributed to all Australian troops.

16 This was important from an Australian point of view because of the different rail gauges between the states and the problem of converting them to a single gauge.
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children from the cradle upwards. From such an audience one quickly realises the sources from which genius in ballet springs. They are all as intensely impressed as we were in the artistry of the production, for that fittingly describes the beautiful music of Tchaikovsky and the adaptation of the ballet with the exquisite poise, control and balance of all the dancers, as well as their dramatic interpretation of the story. As it is beyond our usual lunch hour, our good friend Brimelow of the British Embassy invites us to a late lunch, which he has arranged at the Embassy.

**Monday 22nd February.** It is good to be starting to work in one’s own home and we are now getting the legation into something like shape. The various duties of the legation staff are also taking shape:

- Max Crawford [First Secretary] likes the cultural work and enquiry he is to do,
- John Fisher [Press attaché] works under Max in general press work,
- Keith Officer [counsellor, ie adviser] superintends the diplomatic work,
- Peter Heydon [2nd Secretary] does the technical work of the legation,
- Bill Duncan controls the domestic staff and stores, and
- Mrs Beth Fisher is typist-stenographer and Miss Irene Saxby archivist.
- We also have a Russian woman [Miss Mina] as translator.

[Letter extract: Bill has got the domestic staff working well and it is an interesting group that we have. We did have a snag in a fellow employed as a chauffer - he was very unwilling and tyrannised the women folk, making them both cut and carry up the firewood. He fortunately has been got rid of on the ground that our cars are unlikely to arrive from the USA for some months. The women on the staff are interesting characters. Bill has won their confidence and they like him very much. Tortia is the maid who looks after Officer and me. She is in her thirties, is married and has a four-year-old son. She has been a schoolteacher and is a rather sensitive woman with a deep contralto voice. She knows no English other than a few words which Bill has taught her. Victoria is the second house worker - she also is in her thirties and is married to an officer in the Red Army and has two young children. She is Ukrainian. Nina is the cook - she is approaching 40 and is married with a family. She is clean and, with our somewhat limited rations, is doing a good job. We have had to coach her in making tea and in skimming thick layers of fat from the soups.]
The most interesting character of the lot, however, is Cartia. She is the charwoman/laundress and Bill coined a priceless name for her: “the pit pony”. She is short and tough but withal a happy, genial soul despite a life of 30 years as rough as anyone could imagine. Orphaned at about 12, life has tossed her hither and thither until fate (always unkind to her) linked her life with that of a drunkard to whom she bore four children, all of whom died; the last (a boy of seven) being killed by a train before her very eyes. She vows she will stay with us until she is very old and says that she has never had a happier time in all her life. She told Miss Saxby that when she heard of our legation being established she went to Church and prayed on her knees for two hours that she might get a job with us! Also, to a host of beggars whom she met outside the Church, she promised pieces of bread should she get the job. It now concerns her as to the redemption of her promise to the beggars.

It has been a very human revelation to us, the reactions of these women to their employment. I think they were more or less starving when they first came to us, as they seemed to do nothing but eat. Hunger at last satisfied, came ideas apparently dear to the feminine heart all over the world - personal adornment. They got a manicurist to come in to paint their nails a dreadful bloody colour. They then gave attention to their hair - Cartia’s was particularly rough and unkempt. They finally appeared in rough white aprons and little head caps - a transformation to be sure. I am indebted to Bill Duncan and Miss Saxby for these details.

Lambert of the British Embassy is leaving for London and he takes the opportunity of giving me a welcome (and himself a farewell) by giving a cocktail party. Members of the diplomatic corps, the Soviet people with whom we have dealings and our own staff were invited.

At 8.30 I dine with the Afghan Minister. His legation is almost opposite ours so I have no distance to go. It is a more or less private dinner and, apart from his own staff, there are only the US ambassador, Mr Officer and a surgeon, Captain Lang of the US Services.

**Tuesday 23rd February.** It is Red Army Day and, as far as Kuibyshev is concerned, it is being celebrated very quietly. The buildings are decorated a little and there are banners with slogans emblazoned on them stretched across the street. I understand a big military party is to be given here tonight but the diplomats are all excluded. Their attachés however are all invited and some of the military leaders are to come
Russia, 1943

down from Moscow including, I believe, the Chief of Staff.
I receive a call from Admiral Standley, the US ambassador, and we have a long talk. He thinks the Russian administrators are difficult in that they are so unresponsive and will not co-operate. He instances the trouble he is having with lend-lease problems\(^\text{17}\), as he is unable to get from the Soviets particulars of their most immediate needs. I know nothing of the problem, so am unable to make any comment.

I also receive a visit from the Polish Minister [Tadeusz Romer] who has had a very hard series of experiences during the war. He was arrested, when acting as High Commissioner for Poland, at Danzig by the Germans and thrown into prison where he was beaten up. After his release he went to Romania where he was placed in a concentration camp. After release from this camp he went to France and was there when it fell to the Germans, but managed to get out via Spain. He indicated the problems of his country so far as the Soviet are concerned, as there are 600,000 Poles in the Soviet, most of whom are in Siberia. In addition there are 10,000 Poles in Russian prisons - most of whom are political prisoners. Their legation staff consists of 80 persons, which gives one some idea of the work they must have in relation to their people.

I resume my skating lessons and find that I haven’t forgotten all about it, but it will require a lot of practice before I can safely say that I can get around without assistance.

**Wednesday 24\(^\text{th}\) February.** A bright and sunny day and I go for a pleasant walk before breakfast. I was glad to hear on the wireless that Bert Evatt proposed going to Washington and London. I immediately sent him a cable asking him to come to Moscow, indicating that there was now a speedy way available via the London-Moscow stratosphere service\(^\text{18}\) - the trip only occupying about 12 hours. I am awaiting with great interest his reply.

I had a good working day in the office and was able to complete the reading of dispatches from Chungking [Chongqing, China] etc, in addition to our translations of matters of importance from the local papers. There is a reference to Soviet guerrilla fighters who, between 3\(^\text{rd}\)

\(^{17}\) Lend Lease was a US assistance scheme to its allies. It provided food, raw materials and weapons, with the benefit to the US being “payment or repayment in kind or property or any other direct or indirect benefit”.

\(^{18}\) High altitude flights from the UK to the USSR.
and 5th February, derailed 66 trains of enemy troops (killing about 13,500 Germans), destroyed 67 locomotives and 927 troop wagons and blew up 244 bridges.

**Thursday 25th February.** Perusing the translations of economic matters in the Soviet papers, I find that the power which springs from the industrial forces is largely the result of intense pressure and discipline imposed by the party. The party doesn’t hesitate to dismiss from their posts officials whose indifference and lethargy leads to a falling off in production, either on the collective farms or in heavy industry. On the other hand liberal rewards by way of wage increases, bonuses and additional and better meals are the rewards for the workers who exceed their usual norms of work allotted to them. Great emphasis is placed on the need both to conserve oil and electric power and to increase the efficiency of the power stations.

Today is another fine day and the warmth of the sun has set a thaw - in some parts of our building water has percolated through from the snow on the roofs. Bill had rendered a splendid service in getting for me from the British Embassy a fine carpet for my study and a wardrobe, chest of drawers and floor rugs for my bedroom. He has obtained a reading lamp for me which I can use both in the study and in my bedroom.

I go for another skating practice but the thaw had affected the ice, so I have to content myself by skating near the edge of the rink where the thaw has been less intense. Back to my study to receive a visit from the Swedish Minister. Both he and I admire the view that we get of the Volga and the mountains beyond. Today it is clearer and more enticing than ever before. Streams of people crossing the white frozen river look all the world like black ants. The minister tells me that he heard Hitler’s proclamation today and it was a lesson in hysteria. He thinks Hitler is mentally unbalanced. He feels that unless some striking effort is made at an early date by the allies that it will lead to further distrust of us by the Soviet leaders. He claims that the suspicion and distrust are already bad enough.

**Friday 26th February.** The drive to increase production of the Soviet’s vast war needs is pressed consistently. A press reference to this duty tersely expresses it in these words:

*The main task at present is to increase responsibility, introduce order, establish real war-time discipline at the fields, insist on the fulfilment of the plans and punish severely all those disorganising production and stimulate those showing efficient work.*
Weather still remains pleasant and I continue my skating lessons, having made some progress. I have dinner with the US ambassador, Admiral Standley. It is a rather small affair with only Baggallay (who has just arrived from Moscow), Lambert from the British Embassy and myself present. Standley is still anxious (as I am) to see more of Soviet life and its industries and I think we will have to make a joint request to be allowed to see them. He saw some farms in this district last year, but he expects now to spend most of his time at Moscow. He leaves here for Moscow on Monday. Someone said at the dinner that the diplomatic corps was to leave for Moscow in June and that the whole colony would be there by summer. I hope it comes off, as it would be a unique and interesting move.

After the dinner we were the guests of the ambassador at the ballet Swan Lake. I have now seen it three times but could never tire of it because of its fascination. Some members of the British Embassy have seen it as many as 30 times.

**Saturday 27th February.** Weather still remaining good and not nearly as cold as when we arrived here eight weeks ago. I am now getting into the routine of the work and spend most of the morning in reading reports, dispatches, etc. After lunch I get some exercise (at present on the skating rink) and then back to the legation for more reading and general work (if any is to be done) until dinnertime at 7.15.

The Soviet authorities invited the diplomatic corps to another of its private picture shows and we saw the conclusion of the Stalingrad battle with the surrender of all the [German] generals. It was one of the most interesting factual pictures I have ever seen and I hope it is shown around the world, as this battle is, in my view, the turning point of the present struggle. Anyone who sees this picture and remains cold to the magnificence of the Soviet victory is a poor soul indeed.

**Sunday 28th February.** Weather not so cold and I can feel a marked difference from when I first came here - in fact a thaw today spoilt my having some skating practice. Ambassador Standley invites us in the afternoon to see some moving picture shorts which he has had sent to him, and we are again shown the Stalingrad pictures which made such a vivid impression on me.

At night Bill, Max and I saw the ballet Don Quixote, and it maintained the high standard of ballet work. Even the grotesque characters of Don and Sancho were played with marked dramatic ability. The dancing all round and particularly of some young children (some of whom were
much younger than my daughter Helen) was marked by charm and delicacy.

**Monday 1st March.** Weather still mild with the thaw continuing. It is finding the weak spots in the roof and water is coming through into several rooms. I go to the skating rink for a practice before breakfast but the thaw has left a crust on the ice, so I had no practice. I went for a long walk after lunch and called to inspect one of the churches. It resembled the church we had seen at Moscow. The six chapels were filled with ornaments and pictures. The church was clean and tidy and is apparently looked after by a number of old women.

Baggallay gives a farewell party for Lambert at the British Embassy. The entire diplomatic corps plus the Soviet authorities with whom we have dealings are present.

**Tuesday 2nd March.** Although it snows a little the weather is perceptibly warmer and the thaw continues. As ice-skating is out of the question, I go for several walks round the town. I see a building with an interesting historical background. In it Lenin practised his profession as a defence lawyer in 1893 for 12 months before going to Moscow. This building faces a fine square, in the centre of which is a large statue of Lenin. Another of my walks took me to one of the open air or free markets. In this market were offered for sale a great variety of goods, all second hand and of poor quality. Odd shoes, tools, clothes, foodstuffs - all of it emphasised how hard life is in the Soviet today for so many of the people.

**Wednesday 3rd March.** Office work now getting quieter and I have almost completed my reading of the foreign office dispatches. I can appreciate the restlessness of Mr Officer when he has little or nothing to do. He is going to Moscow for a few days, but the train arrangements are very uncertain and he doesn’t yet know when he will leave. I go for a few walks during the day, do some reading and also work on my Russian grammar - in this way time somehow or other passes.

I have my first dinner party when I have Lambert (who is about to go to London) and Baggallay from the British Embassy. Bill Duncan schools the cook and Tortia (the maid) and between them all a very good dinner is prepared and served in my study. Max takes the rest of the staff out to dinner to celebrate the arrival of a son to Peter Heydon, but is let down badly with the cost of the meal running to nearly 600 roubles (£12) [$530]. Lambert, Baggallay and I have a general talk over the war, but nothing of any real consequence is said. Baggallay tells me that he has
been appointed Consular to the British Embassy at Chungking and expects to go there shortly.

**Thursday 4th March.** Mr Officer is still waiting to go to Moscow and complains about the railway services, but I remind him of the great strain on the services. He gets away at 10pm and expects to leave at midnight. He gives me the good news that the Canadian Minister Wilgress is expected to arrive tomorrow and that the plane will carry mail - so perhaps our first letters will arrive.

Max and I go for a long walk in the afternoon. We are interested in some of the old wooden houses built of split logs, most perfectly fitted together and completely weather proof. By appearance many of these places could have been built 80 years ago, judging by the weathering of the wood. We visit a bookshop and Max buys a set of Lenin’s works. I buy Volume XII, which deals with the agrarian problem. I would have got a set but the difficulty of crating them home is a real one.

Some sidelights on the Soviet - a few proverbs:
Measure often - but only cut once.
Don’t spit in the well from which you draw your water.
Never pay of a night.

I came across a good reference to Rommel and his love of power. It went something like this: *The love of power, the struggle to achieve it, the determination to maintain it and the delight in displaying it was inherent in his whole makeup.*

Apropos of peace feelers, the attitude of the British Government has been well set out in these terms:

_ The Soviet Government can hardly expect the united nations to compromise or have any party with the Axis Governments. Their conduct has been marked by blatant aggression, accompanied by every kind of violence and their aim is the extinction of liberty and justice for all peoples but their own. It should be made quite clear that there is no prospect whatever of the united nations in general, or the British Government in particular, being ready to encourage the Soviet Government to exert their influence to bring about any peace._

_The united nations are determined upon the absolute defeat of the axis powers, the complete liberation of the territories they have overrun and the final removal of the menace of invasion and oppression held over_

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19 United nations refers to the allies, not the UN which was formed after the war.
peace-loving nations by the aggressor states.

**Friday 5th March.** Weather definitely improving, although the temperature remains about freezing point. Still, the walks I have are all enjoyable and they constitute my only exercise these days now that ice-skating seems to have ended for the winter.

Although we waited with great interest, the plane that was to have brought the Canadian Minister and our mail didn’t arrive from Baku. I received a welcome cable from Jack Dedman and it gave me an opportunity to cable him back and ask if Dr Evatt had yet left Australia.

**Saturday 6th March.** Weather still nice and I get a good walk before lunch. After lunch I hear from the British Embassy that the plane bringing the Canadian Minister is expected in a couple of hours, so I get busy to go out to welcome him. We get caught waiting in the vast industrial areas on the outskirts of the town by a long column of railway trucks (87 in all) which block our passage and we have to make a four-kilometre detour. However the Minister had only just landed when we got to the airport. He looked well and said he had had a fair trip all the way but had been delayed 33 days at Miami. He reported that he believed our Cairo supplies were now at Teheran.

It was after 7pm when we got back to the British Embassy, where the Minister is to stay until his house is ready. I was asked to have dinner with him, Lambert and Baggallay. As I was anxious to stay there to see if we were to get our first mail from home, I accepted the invitation. There were 22 bags of general mail and imagine our pleasure when, on opening the Cairo bags, we found that our first letters had come at last. It was 10pm before we were back at our legation with our own mail. What a thrill it was to have ten letters from home with all the news from the date of my departure on 4th November until the last letter, dated 6th January. We all had letters and it was well after midnight before we got to bed. Altogether it was a red-letter night for me!

**Sunday 7th March.** I think the excitement of yesterday unduely upset me, as I have felt off-colour today with an unpleasant headache. However it didn’t deter me from going to a matinée of the ballet *Vain Precautions*. I had seen this sweet whimsical thing twice before but one doesn’t weary of it. Five of us went from the Legation.

**Monday 8th March.** After feeling somewhat off-colour yesterday I’m glad to say that I am feeling better today and have my usual pre-breakfast walk in the sunshine. The air however is still very cold, about 17°F below freezing. The women of the diplomatic corps (I think at
most they can only number six in all) arrange a visit to one of the war orphanages and I go with them. It is in a village about six miles out. Most of the way there are industries and I am more than ever impressed with the volume of war industries carried on at Kuibyshev. The work, as far as one is able to see it, doesn’t have the finish of British, German or US workshops - but it must be remembered that their industrial history is not much longer than half a century. What they have been able to do in this war has staggered the world. What a deep sense of satisfaction it gives to those of us who believe that production for use and not gain should be the dominant economy of the world.

The little orphanage is prettily situated in little dachas [holiday homes] on the Volga. A good deal of the beauty of the place is hidden for the moment by the heavy mantle of snow which covers everything. The directress of the orphanage was giving a talk to the 100 little war orphans gathered in the schoolroom, which was well lighted and comfortably warm. It is Women’s Day in the Soviet today, so the main theme of the talk was the equality for women in the Soviet. It was not an easy task, as she had to put her talk to kiddies who were all motherless and whose ages only ran from three to seven. Still, she spoke with a vigour and emphasis that to me indicated that the message was getting home. I could hear interspersed in her talk the words Lenin, Stalin, Red Army, Leningrad, Moscow and Stalingrad. The children were all clean and tidy and bore every appearance of having been well looked after although they were, with hardly an exception, appallingly thin and emaciated and there was a worn and wan appearance in their faces. The deepest tragedy of war has touched every one of these children - all had lost their mothers in the war and, with many of them, their fathers had either been killed or were still at the front. They had mainly come from Leningrad, Stalingrad, Smolensk, Velikiye Luki and other big cities.

The most pitiable case of all was a sweet little girl aged about five or six, whose mother and father were both killed at Leningrad whilst she herself lost her leg. The sweet human sympathy of the teachers with this little soul was one of the most touching and poignant things I have ever seen in my life. The children then gave us a concert. They recited and sang and danced faultlessly. Life, I am now certain, will have something for them. I gathered, although they were all reasonably warmly clad, that they could do with some little sheepskin coats and caps and I am to get the specifications and sizes so that, from a warm-hearted Australian public, sufficient supplies should come to them by next winter.
Cables have been received from Australia advising me of the arrival there of Mr Vlasov, the Soviet Minister to Australia. I make an appointment with Mr Lozovsky to advise him accordingly and let him know of the warmth of the reception given him and his satisfaction with the arrangements for his accommodation. Lozovsky is very pleased with my advice and will let those “higher up” know about it. I also put to him a request to be given any material published by them in relation to air raid precautions. He has promised me that he will get for me any material they have published although he said most of their instructions to the people had been published in the Soviet press. The other matter I spoke to him about was the “adaptation of the darkened eye” reported in the US press to have been worked out by Soviet scientists. Although he knew nothing about this matter he promised to make enquiries and report to me in due course. I asked if he had any information about the railway gauge question, but he said no. In a general talk he asked about Canberra and when I indicated its population he laughed and said it would only be a village in Russia. Pressing him about the war and how long he thought it would last he merely shrugged his shoulders and would offer no opinion. Although very courteous and seemingly friendly, upon no matter at all does he enlarge or become expansive.

**Tuesday 9th March.** The Australian mail, which came on Saturday, brought me summaries of general political information of Australia up to the end of the year, for which I am grateful.

Another nice day and Bill and I have a long walk after lunch when we pass some canal which appears to link the Samara and Volga Rivers. In the canal was a great number of very large barges, all frozen in - I assume they shelter here against the raging Volga when the ice melts. We also saw an immense silo, much larger than anything we have in Australia. There were fully 100 cylindrical chambers with 30-foot diameters and a height of 100 feet. They indicated the importance of this district as a farming centre.

**Wednesday 10th March.** I receive a visit from the Canadian Minister, Mr Wilgress, who seeks advice and help from me in connection with procedural matters of his office. He is very friendly and well informed and I enjoy the hour’s talk with him. He will leave for Moscow to present his credentials any day now. The furnishing of the house

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20 Scientists of the time were trying to find a way for the eye to quickly adapt to the dark, ie acquire “night vision”, which normally takes about 20 minutes.
Burobin has provided him with is causing him some concern, and he thinks he will have to get some furniture from Iran (the country of bushrangers as Bill Duncan describes it).

After lunch Bill and I walk across the Volga, which is still frozen hard. It is about a mile across and a wind whips up from the ice making the walk rather strenuous.

Max and I are the guests of the Czech Minister and his wife at the theatre. We again see the ballet *Vain Precautions* and, as this is a short production, they produce at its conclusion a short ballet, the music to which is Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker Suite*. It was particularly charming and again gave us much enjoyment.

**Thursday 11th March.** Max and I have a long discussion with Grifford, the economist at the British Embassy. We discuss matters relating to getting information on agricultural, economic and industrial questions from Soviet authorities. I think there is a fertile field in which we can work in this direction. To take one matter alone, we spoke of the research they had been making to discover a frost-resistant tomato plant, and I am anxious to get information about this and some of the seeds if possible.

I have Mr Wilgress (the Canadian Minister) and his secretary with me for dinner and the cook does a good job for us. We have a pleasant evening together and I have invited Peter Heydon, who knew Mr McDonald (the Minister’s secretary) in Washington.

A day of some uncertainty for me as I have symptoms of my old duodenal complaint, so I will have to be extra careful with diet. The limited and unvaried diet which we have is apparently creating trouble for me.

**Friday 12th March.** As my symptoms persist, I phone [Eugene] Dooman of the US Embassy, who is a similar sufferer, and he comes round to see me. He had a recurrence of his trouble in January and was obliged to go to bed for six weeks. He is now awaiting a plane to take him back to the States. Unfortunately the US doctor is in Moscow, but Dooman suggests I get in touch with a Polish woman doctor. I take things easy and rest all day and at night my old friend Dr Pavlov, the Russian doctor, calls to see me. He gives me an overhaul and doesn’t think there is much the matter with me, although he says he prefers to send another colleague who specialises in stomach troubles.

**Saturday 13th March.** I stay in bed all day and read most of the time.
Very late at night - it must have been 10 o’clock - the other doctor comes and has a look at me. I am to submit certain specimens to him for analysis and he says if necessary he will have my stomach fluids examined and, if further necessary, will have an X-ray taken. There is no doubt about his care and he was quite as competent, in my opinion, as the Collins Street specialist I consulted when my trouble first occurred six years ago. He also gave instructions as to diet and it is certain that I will have to be extra careful with what I eat. The prospect of facing any illness here would readily lead to one becoming depressed and I am finding that I will have to fight against that tendency.

I came across a good quotation from a speech of Shinwell recently in the [British House of] Commons: “It is strange” he said “that in this assembly, the cradle of criticism since the days of the Stuart Kings, there should be members who prefer the monotony of agreement to the clash of controversy”.

**Sunday 14th March.** I get up today and, as it is such a bright and comparatively warm day, after breakfast I go for a short walk to the British Embassy. There I weigh myself and find that I am now 156 pounds, so I have lost seven pounds since I was last weighed at Brisbane prior to leaving Australia on November 4th. I can only attribute the loss of weight to the diet, so will have to discuss this problem with the doctors. Bill Duncan, by the way, is giving me every attention and I am now having my meals in my study. The cook is so concerned about my illness that she refused to have a day off today, insisting on coming to work in order to get me the best meals she can. Unfortunately her range is very limited, although she has managed to get a couple of chickens during the last few days. Bill and I have another short walk after lunch and enjoy it very much as the day is so pleasant. The sun has set a thaw, particularly today, and the streets are getting messy.

**Monday 15th March.** My weakness and depression continue, so I arrange to see Drs Pavlov and Krakov in conference. They call at 8.30 and spend 1½ hours with me and I get from them an interesting and penetrating diagnosis of my troubles. I start off by giving them four theories:
(i) A chill contracted during a recent walk across the Volga.
(ii) A return of my old duodenal complaint.
(iii) A weakened debility with nervous background.
(iv) Some internal stomach trouble and (I wildly imagined) cancer.
Their conclusions after a fairly thorough exam were that physically my
organs; heart, lung, chest, throat, etc were sound and strong. My condition they attributed to the following causes:

(i) Marked change of climate I had experienced and its effect upon both my blood stream as well as my nervous system.
(ii) The hot dry air in our house.
(iii) The influence of diet.
(iv) The change in my mode of life and comparative inactivity of my work with consequent introspective thinking of home and the general effect thus caused to my nervous system.
(v) The fears (ill grounded) I entertain about my condition of health.

It was a complete psychological and physical exam and I saw the picture completely and have resolved to apply the directions they indicated as to adapting myself to the changed conditions. This is the program they sketched out:

Morning shower should be tepid - neither too hot nor followed by too cold water. Rest after shower for ten minutes. Then short walk for ten minutes. Breakfast 9am followed by light reading. 10.15 listen to the BBC. 10.30 work in office until 12.00. Then a half-hour walk followed by rest for twenty minutes. Lunch at 1.30 followed by an hour’s rest then further walk. More work if available, then light reading until dinner which should be at 6 o’clock. Evening - read and rest.

It had been another very pleasant day and Bill and I had further walks. I will be glad when some facilities are made available for me to see things. The absence of any work and activity is responsible for my condition.

I came across a good passage in Pushkin’s Queen of Spades: 

*I am not in a position to sacrifice the essential in the hope of acquiring the superfluous.*

**Tuesday 16th March.** Despite the reassuring views of the doctors, I have occasional instances of depression, even though I went out in the glorious sunshine for walks both in the morning and afternoon. My own view of the situation is that the change in my life - from its previous intense activity to its almost complete inactivity here - is the major cause of my trouble. How to make one’s life more active when one is unable to move about freely is rather difficult.

**Wednesday 17th March.** I am feeling much better and go for walks during the day as the weather continues to be excellent - bright sunshine in a cloudless sky. A little more work also keeps me occupied. I have a visit from the good Dr Pavlov at night. He reports the results of the
analyses and tests of urine, etc and says they reflect a condition of normalcy, which is very good. No trace of organic kidney or stomach trouble is present. I am very encouraged by his report and advice. He is to further discuss my case with the panel of doctors at Narkomindel\textsuperscript{21} and will ascertain if any inoculation or other treatment will be given in order to tone up my nervous system where the weakness exists. The doctor stayed with me until after 10 o’clock and the translator and Max were present. Bill brought us tea and the whisky bottle was also made use of. I am very impressed by Pavlov. Before the war he was in charge of a dermatological clinic in Moscow, but now has been assigned by the authorities to attend to the medical requirements of the diplomatic corps.

**Thursday 18\textsuperscript{th} March.** Although I have a good night’s rest, I wake up feeling off-colour. It is one of these disagreeable nerve surges and, although I try hard to shake it off, it persists most of the day. Its effects are to make one depressed and leave one physically weak. However I am confident of getting better as I have complete faith in Pavlov.

I go again for interesting walks in weather which should make any sick person well. With Max and Miss Mina, the interpreter, I go to the foreign library which is housed in the Bolshoi Theatre\textsuperscript{22} buildings. In this library there is a reasonably good collection of foreign books - mainly English, French and German. It is obvious from my glances at the catalogues that Dickens, Scott and Shakespeare are the favourite English authors and London and Lewis-Sinclair the American. I get *Quietly Flows the Don*, as I have been anxious to read this for a long time. I have enjoyed some of the Pushkin stories. They have an interesting historical importance as to portraying life in Russia at the end of the 18\textsuperscript{th} and beginning of the 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries.

The kiddies playing their games in the streets play very similar games to our own - a kind of a hop-scotch and small boys (aged under 12) were playing some little gambling game with kopecks. In one of the bookshops I saw some very interesting stamps and will get a collection of these at a later date.

**Friday 19\textsuperscript{th} March.** Weather still very bright and the thaw continues. The snow on the Volga is starting to melt, but there is still three to six feet of ice to melt before the river will run. I receive a visit from the

\textsuperscript{21} Narkomindel was the People’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

\textsuperscript{22} Bolshoi is Russian for big or large.
Czech press attaché - a well-informed man - and we discuss military and political problems. He, like the rest of us, is disturbed about the second front position. He also displays anxiety about the Polish position so far as it relates to boundaries - particularly of the West Ukraine where, he says, the population is predominantly Russian and not Polish. We agree that it will be unfortunate if these difficulties impede the war effort. A free plebiscite, conducted by independent authorities and free from duress, may ultimately solve the problem.

I spend a very interesting time inspecting one of the primary schools having been helped to make the inspection through the Director of VOKS. Owing to the growth of Kuibyshev and the evacuation of so many families to this district, a strain has been placed on their educational system, but they are by no means neglecting it. Education is free and compulsory up to 15 years. The school we visited has 1500 pupils but, owing to the small size of the buildings, three sessions are required to serve the whole school. First session is from 8am to 11.30 and is for the youngest children, from seven to ten years of age. The second session, from 11.30 to 3.30, is for children from 10 to 13 and the third session, from 3.30 to 11.15, caters for the 13 to 17 age group. The directress of the school is a middle-aged woman who has the distinction of being a member for the Kuibyshev region of the Union of the Soviets. In the lapel of her jacket she wore her parliamentary emblem - a small red flag with hammer and sickle ensign and words (in Russian) “member USSR CS” (Council of the Soviets).

We inspected all the classes and spent quite a long time in the history class. The teacher was giving a lesson on Greek history, showing the ruthless Persian invasions and identifying the struggle of the Greeks with the contemporary struggle of the Russian peoples against the German invaders. The children had to take an active part in the lesson and had to come to the blackboard and indicate both the locality of the attacks and the nature of them. In another room, children were receiving instruction in phases of the war with reference to particular types of weapons used. The bias is for the boys to get instruction in military gymnastics while the girls are prepared for nursing work.

We saw also the French and German classes (rather strange to see the latter - I cannot imagine any school in Germany teaching Russian these days). Both these classes are conducted entirely in these languages and the conversational methods seemed good. Further inspections followed of the drawing session and maths classes. The teachers - nearly all women whose ages would be over 40 - appeared competent. The
appearance of the scholars without exception was one of cleanliness and tidiness. A few of the girls wore a typical school uniform, but generally the clothes on the children indicated the period of struggle through which these people are passing. Discipline in the school was distinctly good - in fact it was impressive without any appearance of servility or cowedness.

After our inspection, which lasted some hours, we went to the room of the directress. Here we met some of the teachers and were given the best hospitality which they could give us, namely glasses of tea and black or white bread with nothing else. They eagerly sought our impressions (I was accompanied by Max) and asked for comparisons. We said that in many respects the types of the children and the teaching methods were similar to our own. If this is typical of their school system, then there can be no doubt of the quality of the citizenship which the Soviet Union is building. The sizes of the classes now range from 45 to 50 due to wartime exigencies; normally they would be 35 to 45. The boys help in many voluntary movements. They go out and get the wood for the winter requirements of the school and they cart it in and then cut and stack it. They also clean the school and generally do what is sought of them.

It is after 3 o’clock before I get back to the legation for lunch, but I have found every minute of my time at the school most valuable and interesting. I have a visit from my good friend Dr Pavlov at night, when he comes with a nurse to start me on a course of treatment which has been decided by his colleagues and himself. I am to have 30 injections - one a day for ten days, then one on each alternate day. The injection is some substance obtained from the horns of a deer and is supposed to be the very best nerve tonic. I am sleeping and eating well, so should be on the way to recovery.

**Saturday 20th March.** I have a visit from my friend the Czech Minister, who is a very friendly man and radical in outlook. He was glad to see me looking well and expected that I would have been in bed. I should take comfort in what he said to me, as he indicated that both his first secretary and his wife suffered from these attacks of depression which occurred only sporadically. He said he longed to take his wife away for a change, as they had been here for 20 months, but there was nowhere he could go. He felt he would have difficulties in getting down to Teheran and incidentally remarked that the last plane which had left here had been held up at Baku for five days because of the bad weather in the mountains. Tears almost came into his eyes when he remarked
that, unlike me, he had no country to return to.

The nurse comes to give me my daily injection. Bill and I have a walk after lunch. Weather is still fine and the thaw is slowly continuing. I saw the very first harbingers of spring today - some pussy willows; shiny brown shoots with downy beads bursting from them.

**Sunday 21st March.** A quiet day with a cold wind whipping up from the still frozen lands. I go to the second part of the ballet matinée, as I had seen *Vain Precautions* four times. The second ballet was adapted to Tchaichovsky’s *Nutcracker Suite* and was very delightful.

I am becoming very restless here, as there is so little to see and do. I am beginning to think that the diplomatic corps should present a united front to the Soviet authorities and press for the transfer of the corps back to Moscow during the summer. We are merely sunk away here in a provincial centre with no prospect of making contacts or of seeing anything - we could learn much more of the country just by reading about it. These views of mine are held apparently by other members of the corps. I propose writing letters to both the British and US Ambassadors seeking their support for united action on part of the corps. The British Ambassador said on this subject recently:

*The conditions of strict seclusion in which we (in common with other missions) are forced to live give little opportunity for discussion or enlightenment. Political conditions, tendencies and ideas can indeed be measured only by a scrutiny of the newspapers or by such visual evidence as is occasionally afforded by standards of dress, the sudden appearance or disappearance of certain classes of consumption goods, the choice of theatrical themes and so on. These things in themselves are slender evidence and their possible significance can be measured only by those few observers who have been long enough in the country to gauge the relative value of each apparently trivial detail. I should therefore hesitate to claim that any interpretation of the present trends of Soviet thought and policy were more than tentative.*

**Monday 22nd March.** More snow fell during the night and there is a fresh white carpet on the roofs which previously had been clean of snow. I read dispatches and translations during most of the morning. I am convinced more than ever that all the thought and energy of this country is bent on the single task of winning the war. I think when that task is won, as I am convinced it will be, the paramount task then confronting the country will be the reconstruction of their devastated areas. This will be a formidable task having regard to the area involved
and the scorched earth policy pursued over so large a part of it. Whole towns will require to be rebuilt, whole areas prepared for agriculture and re-fertilised, and whole populations resettled. They will thus be fully occupied for a long time to come and will pay little heed to enlarging any spheres of influence. Of course from the point of view of security, Russia may well be interested in the Baltic States, parts of Eastern Poland and Bessarabia\(^{23}\) in order that she may secure herself by these strategic frontiers.

**Tuesday 23\(^{rd}\) March.** Mr Officer, who returned from Moscow last night, prepares dispatches to Australia on several matters of importance, notably: Polish-Soviet relations, Finnish moves for peace and Soviet-Turk relations. He found it difficult to get any effective information from the Soviet authorities on matters such as changing railway gauges, parachute drops etc. I discussed with him my suggestion as to a concerted move by the diplomatic corps for a transfer back to Moscow, but he was opposed to any such action on my part. He suggested that I wait and see the American Ambassador who is expected to be here on April 1\(^{st}\). The British Ambassador resides in Moscow all the time\(^{24}\) and I still think that if we are to do any effective work at all, it can only be done by our being in Moscow where representations can be made constantly and can be followed up.

Although still cold, it is another good day, so I go for a long walk in the afternoon. At night I attend one of the Soviet picture shows which is frequently tendered to the diplomatic corps. There were two pictures shown - the first a most excellent one on Stalingrad in peace and war and indicating its almost complete destruction. The second picture portrayed the efforts of the guerrilla forces behind the German lines.

**Wednesday 24\(^{th}\) March.** Although I didn’t sleep well, I feel much better and go with Bill for a long walk in the afternoon. On every hand there are signs that this is a very old town. Many of the houses - particularly in the back streets - are, according to our standards, not in a very habitable condition. Sanitation, drainage and garbage problems leave a lot to be desired. The criticism of the City Soviet, which recently appeared in one of the local papers, was seemingly deserved.

\(^{23}\) A region of the South West USSR including Moldavia.

\(^{24}\) The British and Americans seem to have made a unilateral decision to move their embassies back to Moscow.
As I get another of my turns, a bright suggestion is made by Mr Officer that, as an American plane is likely to be going to Cairo toward the end of the week, I should take the advantage of going down and getting specialist advice. To this end Mr Officer is to make enquiries from the US Embassy. I think that both the advice and perhaps the change down there for a couple of weeks may get me right again.

Some observations on post-war relations between the USSR and other countries:

1. The obvious sphere for Russia to help in post-war reconstruction is Eastern and South Eastern Europe. The reason being the number of Slav populations there.

2. Russia’s great post-war need will be to repair her exhausted industrial power and to repair railways, water communications, housing and agricultural equipment etc. This must inevitably limit the external help she could render.

3. It is suggested that allowing the migration to Siberia of people who previously occupied insecure peasant holdings, would help in reconstruction of Eastern and North Eastern Europe.

4. It may help to encourage trade from east and southeast Europe to accept textiles in exchange for raw cotton etc. Russia has declined as a great food exporter since the Five Year Plans brought about development of her industrial economy. For years ahead she will have to re-fertilise and seed the soil and replace farm buildings, machinery and animals. For these reasons she may have to import substantial quantities of foodstuffs.

5. The rebuilding of wrecked towns and factories and the replacement of industrial plants will take many years and will impose a big strain on heavy industry. There is a prospect then of light industries languishing for some time, particularly if the Soviet priority is the developing and exploiting of its natural resources. It may be a long time before the output of consumptive goods can be expanded to correspond with the expanding wealth of the country.

6. Previously it has been Russia’s policy not to import consumer goods - foreign purchasing power has been almost exclusively used to buy capital goods and raw materials. It may become its policy...

25 Officer, so often at odds with Bill in the past, is most helpful in this regard.
26 Slavs - people of Eastern Europe and Soviet Asia who speak Slavonic languages.
after the war to continue the development of resources and to import some consumer goods. They could do this by exchanging their own raw products, (eg: cotton, timber and oil) for consumption goods. So, instead of diverting capital to expanding light industries to produce consumable goods out of their own materials, the Russians would be able to concentrate on increasing national wealth and at the same time enjoy a rising standard of living.

7. The Soviet principle is that goods are produced for use and not for profit, so production is planned to satisfy definite wants. Prices are therefore not based upon “market” conditions but upon cost of production. This precludes opening a “Russian” market to foreign merchants and accounts for the rouble being an entirely internal currency.

**Thursday 25th March.** It has now been arranged for me to get a seat on the American plane which will leave for Cairo at the end of the week. I think I am wise in making this decision as I feel no improvement, and the change in Cairo and the advantage of specialist advice are important considerations. In view of this decision I call formally on Mr Lozovsky and advise him of my intentions. He wishes me well and hopes to see me back again before long. I also cable Dr Evatt advising him of my intentions.

[Editors’ Note: At around this time, Bill decides not just to go to Cairo, but to continue on to Australia. He does not make this clear in the diary, but in a letter to his wife dated 28/3/43, he writes:]

*As you will know, long before this letter reaches you, I have made my mind up to come home. I cabled Bert Evatt to tell him I had been unwell and was going to Cairo. I didn’t tell him, however, of my decision [to come home], but will do that from Cairo.*

I pay a call on the Chinese Ambassador who speaks English rather well. He is very friendly and well-informed and we have a general discussion. My Canadian colleague (Mr Wilgress) phones me to express his regrets that I am unwell and says I am wise to go to Cairo when the plane is available. He has invited me to lunch tomorrow. I am still receiving the daily injections ordered by Dr Pavlov.

**Friday 26th March.** I have a very bad night and for the first time a little heart disturbance occurs. I think it is a reaction to my going away. I am now preparing for leaving as the plane is expected to arrive tomorrow and leave for Teheran on Sunday. Max Crawford is going to Moscow today with Lawrence of the British Embassy, so Bill Duncan will face a
few lonely weeks.

I have lunch with Mr Wilgress at my old home, the British Ambassador’s Cottage. We dine together and I feel better than I have felt for a week or more. The change of diet and company did me a world of good. Wilgress is an agreeable colleague and we would get on well together. Bill, Keith Officer and I spend the evening in my study discussing all questions.

**Saturday 27th March.** I forgot to add to my note yesterday that Baggallay had called on me and expressed sincere regret to hear of my illness and my going to Cairo. He said that he hoped I would soon be back, as he and all the Embassy staff had appreciated the relations existing between us.

I had a good night’s rest which was very welcome after my bad night on Thursday. I went to the bookshop with Miss Saxby to see if I could get any books but none was available - however I got some interesting stamps instead. It is another pleasant sunny day, although the night was seemingly cold and frosty by the appearance of the roofs.

Dr Pavlov comes to see me again and finds me much better, with pulse strong. I think he feels that the heart disturbance I experienced on Thursday night might have been due to the injections, so he has given me powders and drops to take in the event of further attacks. I have another attack after dinner and it left me rather miserable, so I asked the translator to get Dr Pavlov to see me tomorrow as I might suggest the discontinuance of the injections. Bill and I walk to the shop where he gets some more stamps.

I call and see the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps (the Afghan Minister) and tell him of my proposed visit to Cairo and the reason for it. We have a long talk and he tells me how miserable he feels here because of absolute inactivity. He has been here for two years without leave and, when he recently asked for leave, his Government politely asked him to wait a little longer. He is suffering from antrum trouble and says the doctors say they are unable to give him appropriate treatment, as they lack the necessary instruments. He still is a little fearful of what Russia may do after the war, particularly with the adjoining countries. I answered by saying that I didn’t think Russia would be interested in external affairs or countries after the war as there would be so much for her to do for her own people, and that those matters would absorb all her energies. However my views didn’t impress the Afghan who is still rather perturbed - that is if he could be perturbed over anything.
The Chinese Ambassador returns my call and we have a friendly talk. He referred to the very active life he spent in the Foreign Office at Chungking when he started at 7.30 and worked until 6pm. He said that he had listened to Eden’s American broadcast and very much preferred its outlook to that of Prime Minister Churchill. He (the Ambassador) wants the war looked at globally and not from the European point of view. I replied that this was precisely the view of our own government.

**Sunday 28th March.** Spent another very wretched night with little or no sleep and a palpitating heart. I am rather glad that I arranged for Doctor Pavlov to see me this morning, and I will be glad when the American plane arrives, as I fear I am suffering nervous reactions. Dr Pavlov calls to see me and after examining my heart says it is sound. He attributes the palpitations to the injections which he says are very potent, so he decides to discontinue them.

I go to see the matinée of the ballet *Swan Lake* and enjoy it very much. It has been the most entertaining and wonderful recreation I have had here. Weather again nice and bright and the thaw has set in.

**Monday 29th March.** I am happy to report spending a much better night. Both Dr Pavlov and Dr Krakov call and see me and I am given another good overhaul. Special attention is paid to my heart which has been fluttering a little because of the injections that I had been daily receiving. Both doctors are quite satisfied with my organic condition which they agree is sound and good. However, they say I have a functional nervous disorder which they attribute to the causes previously indicated - namely change of climate, diet and life generally. They say the condition is amenable to treatment and that the change to Cairo should help me greatly.

Baggallay calls and says the British Ambassador is disappointed that he has not been able to see me. I hear that there is likely to be a fair delay in the movements of the American plane, as the pilot has gone down with pneumonia, so my plans may be altered and I may go down in the next Soviet plane. This may not be for a week or more, as I believe it has been held up at Teheran on account of the bad weather over the mountains. However the reassuring advice of the doctors has helped me so I will just have to be patient.

Went for my usual afternoon walk and saw youngsters propelling self-made scooters. Toys and games in many respects are seemingly universal. Bill was telling me that he saw one of the town workers spill some salt and then pick some up and throw it over her shoulder - a thing
I have seen done repeatedly in Australia.

**Tuesday 30th March.** I entertained my first Russian guests at dinner last night. They were my friend Dr Pavlov and our translator Miss Mina. The doctor’s English is not considerable, hence my invitation to the translator to help us through. Pavlov is more of a medical teacher and research man than a general practitioner, but the war has made such an inroad on the profession that teachers have been mobilised for general practice. His special work is in dermatology and he has done a lot of leprosy work. Altogether we had a very pleasant talk, but there was no mention of politics or the regime.

[Letter extracts: Pavlov and I spoke about medicine, the war, travel in Russia in pre-war days, literature etc but never once referred to politics. We are not making much active contact with the Russians; in the first place you are completely handicapped if you don’t know the language and then there are such limited opportunities of contact. There is no such thing as making friends with any Russian family; the suspicions against foreigners, particularly in wartime, apparently still exist.]

I spent another extremely wretched sleepless night attributed, I believe, to the news of the delay in the movements of the plane. My good friend the doctor came and said it was all the result of thinking I might not be able to catch the plane. He takes a strong view (with which I agree) that I should take no sleeping draughts but quietly prescribes a ½ cup of vodka with water and salt with which I am to lightly massage myself for three minutes prior to taking a warm bath immediately before going to bed. Later on I do this and get a good night’s rest. He also strongly urged me to go for more walks and, whilst I was doubtful about keeping an appointment to go to the opera with Mr Wilgress, he said I should go.

I go with Bill as guests of Mr Wilgress to see the opera *Eugene Onegin*. It is built on a famous poem by Pushkin, the music being by my now-acquired favourite Russian composer Tchaichovsky. I don’t think I have ever seen a more delightful opera and my chief regret is that I have not seen it more frequently. The ball scene in the third act was vibrant and charming. It was a magnificent picture of aristocratic life in Russia at the beginning of the 19th century. Wilgress told us at the opera that a plane had arrived with mail so we had another pleasure in store for us when we returned to the legation.

**Wednesday 31st March.** It is Helen’s 10th birthday and silently and from afar I wish my dearest girl very, very many happy returns of the
day. We received our second mail today and very welcome it was. How I love the home letters with such full accounts of the family’s doings. Snaps of the kiddies were also much appreciated and were shown round to members of both the legation and domestic staff.

Very little work as usual to do in the office, so I went for a good walk before lunch and had my first experience of rain in Kuibyshev, which indicates that the weather is now no longer cold enough for snow to fall. After lunch Dr Pavlov calls and brings me a cake of chocolate. I showed him the family portraits and, when he saw those of my son Bill in his vegetable garden, he renewed his promise to get me some of Michurin’s works on agricultural problems.

Bill Duncan and I go for another walk and call in and see Elvins and O’Leary of the British Embassy staff who have a cottage next to the Chinese Embassy. It is a very comfortable place and after a nice cup of tea they played some gramophone music. They have brought a lot of Soviet records very cheaply and I rather envy them. I often wish we had a gramophone, as it is difficult to get any good musical programs on the wireless.

**Thursday 1st April.** Another quiet uneventful day and I spend most of it indoors, only going out for two short walks. Dr Pavlov calls to see me in the evening and explains my free perspiration as being due to the heat of the house and the very warm clothes I am wearing. I open the bedroom window and change into a lighter singlet and manage to get a most excellent night’s rest. Bill and I had arranged to go and see the opera *Demon*, but I didn’t feel like going so we cancelled the engagement. At last some of our supplies have come from Cairo and are now at the Customs House waiting to be cleared. We should get them tomorrow.

**Friday 2nd April.** Another quiet day, particularly as far as any work is concerned - and I think this complete inactivity is the strongest factor in my breakdown. I do a little reading and go for short walks, but this exhausts all that I can do. Today there is a little variation as, with Bill, I go to Elvins’ cottage at 4.30 for tea and have some more delightful gramophone music. They have certainly collected a fine repertoire.

At 8pm I go as a guest of the Dean of the Corps (the Afghan Minister). It is only a small party, but fairly representative of the allied nations.

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27 I.B. Michurin (1855-1935) was a Russian biologist.
there is Barry from the British Embassy, Dooman from the US
Embassy, the Chinese Ambassador and his Consular, Wilgress (the
Canadian Minister) and myself. Despite all the protests of the Afghan
about the food situation in Kuibyshev, I think he knows his way about,
as he served a fine dinner. It consisted in the main of things which I
could eat: boiled fish, chicken, rice and caramel custard. After dinner a
Four played contact bridge, but I contented myself with looking on.

**Saturday 3rd April.** Again spent a very bad night, so I ask Dr Pavlov to
call. He sees me late in the afternoon and as a result of his visit
important decisions are made. He informs me that, owing to the
conditions of the thaw, there is little likelihood of any planes leaving
from Kuibyshev for some time. He considers it advisable for me to go
to Moscow, from which city planes leave fairly frequently for Teheran.
This idea appeals to me greatly, as the prospect of remaining in
Kuibyshev for some weeks would have a distressing and bad effect on
me. The doctor further informs me that a train is expected from
Tashkent tomorrow morning, so we all get busy to get me a seat on it,
particularly as we find it has an International Wagon on it.

Mr Officer goes at once to see Lozovsky but just misses him. However
he sees Tomen who assures him of all help and they certainly do help in
every way. The International Wagon was fully booked but, as a result of
Narkomindel’s great work, we are advised during the night that our
seats are secured and we are to board the train at 1am on Sunday. We
then get busy with our packing. This is not so difficult as I am leaving
all my heavy leather things and my books - it is no use taking them back
to Australia\(^28\).

I will take my leather overcoat with me to Moscow, then leave it there
and Max (who fortunately is at Moscow and will be with us there) can
then bring it back to Kuibyshev. Narkomindel also gave Mr Officer
assurances that I would be given a seat on the very first plane out of
Moscow - so that is another evidence of the way they are helping me. I
have a further comfort in going to Moscow as I will see Dr Lang of the
US Embassy and get his advice.

Late at night Mr Officer very nicely opened a bottle of wine and, with
the assembled staff, wished me *bon voyage* and speedy recovery. It was
a very kindly gesture. The domestic staff was very moved by the news
of the departure of Bill and me. Cartia was heartbroken, as she had

\(^{28}\) This is the first mention of his returning to Australia, not just to Cairo.
become a very warm friend of Bill. I think that, illiterate and crude as she may be, that she is one of the world’s best women. Always thoughtful and kindly with marked intuition and a veritable amazon for work, we could not have got a better houseworker if we had scoured all Russia. Very tearfully then members of the house staff bade me dosvidania. With Bill’s going I think they were all heartbroken, as he had brought friendship and understanding into their lives that they will find impossible to get from anyone else. I want also to say how I have valued the friendship and advice of my good friend Dr Pavlov. His quiet demeanour and his advice and assistance have been most helpful to me in this crisis in my life.

And so in the wee small hours of the morning of Sunday the 4th April I make my departure - with my faithful friend and comrade Bill Duncan - from Kuibyshev. This provincial centre of massive Russia has, since the crisis of Moscow in October 1941, been the home of the diplomatic corps - even though it is not the capital of Russia. Upon reflection, it seems to me a pity that the diplomats are estranged from the capital, as keeping them in such a relatively remote provincial centre only results, so far as we are concerned, in our remaining both inactive and impotent. It may be that the Soviet authorities have reasons for keeping the diplomats so far away - I am readily conscious of the fuel, food and housing problems of Moscow. Still, I think this problem has affected both me and my work. It is, and will always be, difficult to do any effective diplomatic work whilst we remain at Kuibyshev - as I have all too unhappily realised. Hence, the work which I was hopeful my mission would have succeeded in doing (namely the broadening of friendships between our countries and the free exchange of their culture and knowledge) has been very difficult. I don’t wish this to reflect upon the deputy commissars of foreign affairs stationed at Kuibyshev in Messrs Vyshinsky and Lozovsky. They have been courteous and friendly on every occasion, but they could only act as conduits, sending our representations to Moscow and waiting interminably for replies.

I have appreciated and pay tribute to the help given to me and my legation on all occasions by our friends of the British Embassy. The US Ambassador and his embassy staff have also helped to lighten our difficulties. The Dean and members of the corps generally have been hospitable and friendly. I hope that when my successor comes to Russia the corps will then be at Moscow, as I feel that the scope for useful service will be tremendously widened by such a change of venue.

As I say, there have been very limited opportunities for work and
activity at Kuibyshev. Contacts with Russian people have been almost impossible and very few opportunities afforded of getting any glimpses of the social or economic life of the people. It is obvious from the visual observations one was able to make in one’s random walks around the town that life pressed very hard on the mass of the people. Although there are now more than a million people in Kuibyshev (and it is obvious that there has been a tremendous development of war industry) there are practically no shops or shopping. The profound dearth of consumer goods is real. Queues of people await outside the bread and grocery shops. The newspaper kiosks and bookshops are always well patronised, but the large pre-war shops and emporiums are now serving purposes other than satisfying consumers needs.

From the experience one has had of life here in Kuibyshev, I have come to the conclusion that a colossal task faces Russia in the post-war era. It must re-build so much that has been destroyed or impaired, and supply the almost untold quantity of consumer goods that everywhere will be wanted. Given these problems, surely all desires to concern themselves in the affairs of the world outside of Russia will be quickly dissipated.

We had few opportunities for cultural knowledge in Kuibyshev, but the single recreation to which we had access was one that gave unbounded pleasure and delight - it was the opera and the ballet. In 1936-8 the authorities built the Bolshoi Theatre, or “Palace of Culture” as I think it is termed. It was built on a large square upon which, in pre-Revolutionary times, the cathedral stood. It is a magnificent structure and its proportions are nobly planned with the open spaces surrounding it making it all the more impressive. In front of the theatre is a very large statue of Kuibyshev, who was one of the stalwarts of the revolution and a great personal friend of Stalin, and it is said one of the active minds behind the Soviet’s Five Year planning periods. Internally the theatre is very good and accommodates 2500 people. It was here that I saw many a notable opera, including Eugene Onegin, Barber of Seville, Traviata and Queen of Spades and also many ballets including Crimson Sails, Swan Lake, Don Quixote and Vain Precautions. It is difficult to describe the general artistry of these performances. Most of the performers are from Moscow and very talented they are. These splendid performances are much appreciated by the diplomatic corps, and at every performance a fair sprinkling of the diplomats and their staff can always be seen.

I believe that in the summer, when the Volga is running, that boating and swimming would make life more attractive for us, but for the three
months I’ve been here the great river has been white and hard and silent. It has been a hard blow to me to have to make a decision to relinquish my post, but my health is suffering severely here. I think the first diagnosis of the doctors was an accurate one - climate, diet and inactivity have affected my nervous system to such an extent that to stay here any longer would definitely imperil my health. I want further specialist opinion, which I will now be able to get both in Moscow and Cairo and it may be that our route home will be via England, in which event I would get very good advice in London.

**Sunday 4th April.** We leave the legation at 1am for the train. Narkomindel is true to its word, as an official is there to see us safely put on the International Wagon, which is situated right at the station. I go to my berth at once after bidding Mr Officer and Peter Heydon sincere farewells. I have a good sleep and do not hear the train move off, which it did some time in the early hours of the morning. When I wake we are well on our way but the train does not make speed - moving no faster, in my opinion, than 15 mph. There is not the same mantle of snow over the countryside as there was on the occasion of each of my last two visits to Moscow.

**Monday 5th April.** Still slowly on the way, but I have a good night’s rest so don’t mind the slowness. The thaw having cleared most of the snow, I get views of the types of soil on the vast steppe regions over which we pass. The bulk of the country appears to be a light loam and in the main is all arable. In places we come to much stronger black soil areas, reminding me much of Strathkellar [in Victoria]. Everything is in readiness for the spreading of manure and the sowing of seeds. Outside the farm buildings the cattle are all freed and the implements are being got in readiness for intense use for the next few months. The weather is much milder and, although our carriage is not warmed, we have not felt the cold at all.

**Tuesday 6th April.** Still on the train and the attendant tells us we should reach Moscow at about 4pm. Most of the country through which we pass is entirely clear of snow and in one or two places we see the bright green shoots of the new crops, the abundance of which this country so vitally needs. These crops obviously were planted in the autumn and the seedbeds have been kept warm by the mantle of snow.

We pass through one railway centre, not many miles from Moscow, where there are immense quantities of war materials - jeeps, wagons, guns, ammunition wagons etc, etc, and also many hundreds of farm
wagons and implements. Unless one has seen what the railway services are carrying in Russia today, one hasn’t the slightest conception of it. We also pass over the Volga - some hundreds of miles north of where we have so frequently seen it at Kuibyshev - and here it has wrestled with and defeated the ice and is proceeding on its vast journey southwards.

True to our attendant’s prediction, we arrive in Moscow at 4pm where Max meets us and we go to the National. I again am to occupy the room I have previously occupied, which faces the Kremlin. After a short rest and cup of tea, Bill and I go for my favourite walk up past the Kremlin, Red Square and St Basil’s to the Moscow River which is running free. It is a nice day and these famous sights impress Bill just as they always impress me.

Wednesday 7th April. I go for a walk with Bill and we go up past the Lenin Library with its magnificent square pillars and its quaint life-size figures along the top of the building. I would like very much to see the interior, as I believe it is one of the largest - if not the largest - library in the world. We continue our walk into Gorky Street and then go on past the Filial and Bolshoi Theatres and return past the Moscow Hotel to our hotel.

I then call and see surgeon Cormack Lang of the American army and discuss my case with him. He attributes my trouble to malnutrition and sees no reason to disagree with the diagnoses of the Soviet doctors. He says the food problem is a very acute one here and does not offer the requisite vitamins. His opinion is that I should return to Australia at once and he is to further examine me tomorrow and will give me some vitamins to help me on my way. I weighed myself on his scales, as did Bill Duncan. I found that I had lost 13 pounds since leaving Australia, while Bill had lost nine pounds. It turns out that Blunden (who called to see us later in the day) has lost 20 pounds since coming to Russia, and he is only a young man.

I took the opportunity of seeing the American Ambassador and had a long talk with him. He very generously will help Bill and me to get seats on his Liberator plane, which may go right through to the USA direct. It is wonderful to me how he has adapted himself to this country, having regard to his age and condition of life. Of course he has much more work to do than I ever had and is stationed here in Moscow as against Kuibyshev, so these are factors that would influence one’s mental outlook.
The Ambassador very generously placed a car at my disposal. In the afternoon Bill and I went for a most interesting drive along the banks of the Moscow River through the City generally and out to the Lenin Hills, from the heights of which a wonderful panorama of Moscow was seen. Some idea of the size of the City and the largeness of its buildings is given when one looks across the city, as we did from our pleasant vantage point.

I called and saw the British Ambassador [Sir Archibald Clark Kerr] and found him to be very direct but quite friendly. I rather liked him and we discussed John Latham and Fred Eggleston. He got on very well with Eggleston at Chungking and said that Eggleston’s standing among the Chinese authorities was very high, as they looked upon him as a scholar. I was very sorry to hear that Eggleston was virtually crippled with arthritis and had to be taken everywhere in a chair. The Ambassador has a low opinion of Kuibyshev and said he wouldn’t remain there. It is freely stated that he stands on a very good footing with Stalin and sees him from time to time.

The Ambassador has invited us to lunch with him tomorrow, so I am looking forward to a further talk with him. At night I introduce Bill to the Filial theatre and we are indeed most fortunate in securing good seats and we see the most exquisite of ballets, *Swan Lake*. I think this was the sixth time I had seen it, but tonight it was more gloriously performed that ever before. The ballerina Lepeshinskaya gave a most talented performance of dancing and acting - I can readily believe she is the world’s best ballerina. Her poise of limbs, control of movement, balance and the rhythm of her dancing were such that I will long remember her artistry.

You suffer by going to the theatre, as the performance starts at 7pm so you get no tea before you leave and it is too late to get anything when you return. By luck we manage to get something from the hamper which Max has gathered together for his return trip to Kuibyshev, and our supper consisted of a tin of plums and some wheatmeal biscuits. With the aid of a Tommy cooker we were able to make a welcome cup of tea. We had been told that there might be a plane going to Baku early tomorrow morning, but late at night we were advised that it was not going.

**Thursday 8th April.** Bill and I, with one of the clerks from the service department of the hotel, went off on a mission to buy some stamps and we managed to get a remarkable collection. I can imagine the thrill [my
Russia, 1943

sons] Bill and John will get when I bring them home.

I see Surgeon Commander Lang and he overhauls me and gives the same encouraging account of my health that the Soviet doctors gave. He says however that the food available is inadequate for my regimen and I would suffer not only continual ill health but that my condition would become serious. He regards my condition as such that there is no alternative but for me to return at once to Australia. He confirmed completely the opinion which he gave me yesterday and upon which my cable to the PM was based, asking that I be allowed to return to Australia at once and relinquish my office.

Max, Bill and I were the guests of the British Ambassador at lunch in his flat. From the meal we had I can understand why he does not suffer from any malnutrition! It was a simple but nourishing and interesting meal, and I even had a mandarin. After lunch we stayed talking until 4pm. I asked him how he got on with Stalin and he said he got on very well - he only sought interviews on vital matters and found Stalin both responsive and direct. He said, *apropos* Churchill’s visit to Stalin last year, that one night it was suggested the two leaders should have a short quiet talk together. An appointment was made for 7pm and Churchill told the Ambassador he would be back by 8.30 for dinner. Instead of that time it was 3.30am when Churchill returned. I wonder if history will ever tell us of this unique and lengthy private interview.

At night we see another ballet *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. It is quite different from the other ballets - whimsical and skilful, and the acting is particularly good.

**Friday 9th April.** As we have had no news of the departure of the Soviet plane, Bill and I decide that it would be wiser to accept the offer of the American Ambassador of two seats on the American plane to Cairo. Perhaps, if the fates are generous to us, it will go right through to the States which is (we believe) its destination. After another walk to the stamp shop where we purchase some more good stamps, I call and see the ambassador who is particularly generous to me. He says that the seats are right as far as Cairo, and that he will do all he can to secure them for us right through by making representations to the Department of State for us. It will be a great relief for me if I can manage to get through so quickly and should mean that I may be back in Australia within six weeks.

The break here in Moscow is doing me a lot of good (as I am more occupied) but I still feel weak and will be glad of the opportunities that
home will give me to build up my strength. We have been without any news (war or otherwise) practically since we left Kuibyshev. It seems extraordinary that one should be in one of the great capital cities of the world and yet unable to know what is going on both inside and outside the country. Of course our inability to speak and read the Russian language is primarily the reason.

I meet the new Mexican Minister whom I last saw in Washington at Mr Litvinov’s party. He has come to Moscow to present his credentials and is full of vigour and enthusiasm. He is a competent linguist and says that he is determined to master Russian. He has only been given apartments in Kuibyshev and says that he is going to ask Monsieur Molotov, when he sees him, if he can be allowed to remain in Moscow. I will be very interested in the reply he gets to his request. I have phoned for an appointment with Molotov, as I think I shouldn’t leave the country without telling him of my reasons for going. Bill and I go for another walk after lunch round old Moscow where there are traces of some considerable demolition work. I assume this was part of the general rebuilding scheme of Moscow.

We go at night to see what has become one of my favourite operas, *Eugene Onegin*. I had seen it previously in Kuibyshev. The performance was very good but I don’t think it reached the Kuibyshev standard. The stage was much smaller and effect wasn’t given to the famous ballroom scene in the third act. The work of the baritone, however, was brilliant.

**Saturday 10th April.** A rather raw day as Bill and I set out on our walk to the British Embassy. At a junction where about five roads converge we take the wrong one and, before we go too far, decide to return as we have an appointment to see the Lenin Library at 11 o’clock. I was glad of the opportunity of seeing this fine building and to get some news about it. The war has prevented its completion and when finished it will probably be the largest in the world. Already 50 million roubles have been spent on it and it houses nine million volumes. There are in the book storage section 18 floors, ten of which are already filled. Cataloguing is done on the author and subject classification system. There is a staff of 700 employed; at present most are women.

We saw first the reference chambers or floors and then passed on to the specialist section. Then, by way of a tunnel, we went to the older sections of the building where the general reading room is. This is a well-lighted room on the street, but only accommodates 300 readers. The children’s section, which is new, is bright and interesting and at
night is filled to its capacity of 200 readers. Daily attendance in the general reading room is now about 1000 - pre-war it was 2000. The library is now open from 10am to 10pm; pre-war it was 9am to midnight. There is no lending section, but there is a number of filial (or adjunct libraries) to which books are sent out from this, the parent library. Some of these filials in the summertime are in the Parks of Rest and Culture. In this way books are brought to the people and there are many evidences that the Russians are a keen reading people. Their interest in foreign countries, people and literature is pronounced.

Bill and I have a pleasant lunch with Geoff Blunden at his hotel. He is much less gloomy than when I saw him last - I suppose the reason is that he is leaving in a few days after having been here for 13 months. The hardness of the life has left its mark on him, although he is quite a young man. He revealed many of his experiences to us and, although he likes the people very much, he is somewhat hostile to the regime.

After lunch we went to the American Ambassador’s quarters where we saw *Fantasia*. He [the ambassador] apparently gives some sort of picture show every Saturday afternoon to which the diplomatic corps and the staffs of the British and American Embassies are invited. It is an opportunity for this very limited [English-speaking] community to see its members.

We had to hurry away before the end of the picture, as I had secured an appointment to see Molotov at 6pm. I had a little surprise in mind - to take Bill in with me - and I succeed in doing so. It was my fourth visit to the Kremlin (so I haven’t done too badly) although I have shared the experience of [many of] my fellow diplomats in that I have not seen Stalin. Just before six we went off by car to the Kremlin and now had a good opportunity of seeing everything as it was daylight, whereas on the occasion of my previous visits it was dark or nearly dark. It is a walled city with quaint buildings and chapels within its walls and they represent quite a variety of architectural periods.

I tell Monsieur Molotov my decision about returning to Australia and he is sorry. We have a general talk for 20 minutes and I thank Narkomindel for what it did for me and pay particular references to Dr Pavlov. Bill told him of his experience in the Trade Union movement and we asked him if it were possible to see Shvernik (the trade union leader) before we leave, and I think this will be arranged. Finally I said that I hoped victory would come quickly because of the brunt his people had borne in the struggle. He evinced very great confidence in the capacity of the
Russian armies to remain undefeated by the Germans, but remarked we want others to also help in this great task. And so I said farewell to the Kremlin, symbol of the silent but immense power of the Socialist State.

Bill and I go at night to see a wonderful Russian opera Ivan Susamin. I had previously thought Eugene Onegin the finest opera I had seen here but Ivan Susamin has easily displaced it. It is a simple romantic opera built upon the 18th century period when the Poles attacked the Russians. The exquisite scenes of village life and villagers and the superb acting and singing holds one enthralled. First the choral work, and there were more than 100 on the stage for it. Then came the duets, quartets and solos of the tenor, soprano and contralto, and the amazingly brilliant work of Michailov, who must be the world’s best bass. All made a picture which will never go from my memory.

**Sunday 11th April.** As it is a bright sunny morning, Bill and I go for our favourite walk up past the Red Square and St Basil’s and across the Moscow River. On our return we make a close inspection of the Lenin Mausoleum. Its lines are massive and the style I would say was modern. Three different types of marble are used. The low wall surrounding the mausoleum is of a grey marble with vivid blue streaks and blotches. The base blocks are of a jet black marble and the upper blocks and superstructure are in red granite.

As Max is leaving today [for Kuibyshev], we remain in the hotel and watch him pack the numerous books he bought. The British Embassy is giving him a lot of stuff to take back with him, including one of our typewriters. Altogether he has 17 packages to look after so it’s just as well that he has a compartment to himself. VOKS has treated him very well and, following on Daryl Lindsay’s request, he (Max) has obtained from VOKS a great variety of publications on Soviet art and culture. I am to take back to the Gallery three fine books of prints - I hope they will be exhibited when I return and that we will exchange some of our art catalogues with VOKS. I think Max has opened a door in this direction and that great value will ultimately derive from it. We see Max off on his train at 5pm. He expects to be on the train for three days at least.

At night we go to the Moscow Circus. I was eager to go for the purpose of comparing it with Wirth’s. The circus is apparently a permanent feature as it is housed in a specially erected building circular in form. All the seats are comfortable and afford almost an equal view. The arena is rather small with a diameter about 50 feet. The lighting effects
were good and were thrown from searchlights and coloured lights from different places in the roof. The features I suppose were common to the continental circuses - the draperies being red, as was the colour of the attendants’ uniforms. The ringmaster was immaculately dressed in tails. The display was more vaudeville than animal, the only performing animals being six horses and two dogs and they gave the usual performances. Acrobatic turns were general, although there was a most excellent diabolo turn by three artists, and the blondin work of a quartet of three men and a woman was impressive. The single clown patterned his work on that of Chaplin, and he was rather droll. The final item was given by an illusionist and consisted of a number of clever turns.

**Monday 12th April.** A very bright sunny day and Bill and I walk to the British Embassy, taking care that we don’t lose our way this time. We have to see that our passports have the correct exit visas. They are endorsed for exit via Baku, but now the Soviet authorities may require Moscow or Kuibyshev endorsement. I invite Geoff Blunden to lunch, which we have in my room. It was arranged by the Service Bureau of the hotel and they put on the very best meal we have as yet had at the hotel. Blunden is very anxious to get away and believes he is to go on the first outward-bound Soviet plane, although he is still pressing the US ambassador for a seat on the precious Liberator.

As the day is so bright and fine, we all go for a walk after lunch round the Kremlin. We go up the Western side along the park, then cross over the Moscow River and return on the eastern side past Red Square. It was a delightful happy walk and we enjoyed it very much. We have a bit of tea before we go to the theatre. It is about 6 o’clock and the sun is still shining brightly across the square which faces our hotel. It lights up the Kremlin walls and buildings which are opposite our hotel. I think, as I look out on what is now a bright and peaceful scene, of the turmoil and strife which these same walls have seen down the turbulent centuries of Russian history.

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29 Diabolo involves catching spinning tops, plates etc on cord fastened between sticks. Blondin (after Frenchman Charles Blondin) is tightrope walking.
We again go to a theatre at night and see this time an operetta featuring Strauss. We had an interesting experience at the theatre with one of the NKVD men. He took me to the manager’s office where Bill and I were allowed to leave our coats and caps. Thus we were saved the trouble of the crush in both putting them in and taking them out of the immense cloak rooms. After the show he piloted us back to the office, so we were among the first to leave the theatre.

Tuesday 13th April. We gather from the American Embassy that (weather permitting) the Liberator is to leave tomorrow morning, so we packed our valises which were collected by someone from the embassy. We are to be advised later as to the likely time of departure. We get a surprise to see the couriers from Kuibyshev. It appears that it will be sometime before planes will leave Kuibyshev owing to the state of the airfield, so they have come to Moscow whence they will leave for Teheran.

We go for short walks before lunch and then, with one of our faithful friends from the service bureau, we go to one of the shops to see if we can buy anything to take home. It is rather tragic to see this big shop, which before the war was filled with goods, but which is now almost empty. The only things they could show us were a few small tablecloths, a few boys’ blouses and some lacquered boxes, one of which I brought for Helen. I think it is obvious that Russia’s needs in consumer goods is today illimitable and this need will doubtless play a big part in the future economy of the country.

Bill and I had an hour’s interview with Shvernik, the leader of the Trade Union movement in Russia. He is a strong-faced resolute type of man, not unlike Molotov in appearance and build, but he had more fire and vitality than Molotov and appeared to be eager to help in the various matters put to him. He indicated in a few words the strength of the Trade Union movement in Russia. It has a membership of 25 million but membership, strangely enough, is not compulsory - so not all workers are in unions. In some industries union membership ranges as high as 95%, but in others (notably agriculture) it falls below 75%. He didn’t attempt any description of the functions of the trade union or its peculiar relationship with the Government. He was most anxious to be told about our trade union movement and its organisation and of its relation to the Government. He strongly favoured the closest co-

30 The Ministry of Internal Affairs (ie the Special Police); a forerunner to the KGB.
operation between the trade union organisations of the democratic countries and supported international trade union conferences and exchanges of visits of trade union leaders. He said that, whilst he couldn’t bind his government, he thought nevertheless that it would approve of an exchange of visits of trade union leaders in Australia and the Soviet, and suggested that the ACTU may initiate the matter. He also freely agreed that facilities would be made available to Bill to visit Soviet industries in the event of his return to Russia and said that at any time he would be happy to meet Max Crawford. Bill put the case very clearly to him and impressed him because of his long association with the Trade Union movement in Australia and his wide knowledge of its functions and powers.

At night we went to a concert in the famous Tchaichovsky Hall. It is most beautiful and a great tribute both to Russia’s most famous composer and to the Soviet architects who planned and designed it. The hall is oval in shape with seats stretching up to the roof, with a slender balcony immediately beneath the ceiling. The roof is in bluish tinted glass with a sort of criss-cross pattern. The lighting is effected by a whole series of lights set in the circumference of the ceiling, which give a delicate, subdued but balanced effect to the whole hall. The walls and seats are in cream and there is a large open stage on which large bodies of players, singers and musicians can be assembled, so their work is given the fullest acoustic advantage. I feel that my description of this lovely hall is quite inadequate but, as I said before, the hall is the best possible memorial to one of the greatest men the country has produced.

We heard a concert that was unique. There were about 30 singers - male and female - and they were dressed in typical Russian peasant garb. The first part of the program was devoted to old Russian folk songs and dances, the latter being accompanied by a quaint Russian string orchestra. The second part of the program consisted of Russian songs, a number of which dealt with War themes. Then came modern dances, danced with a speed and gusto that held one breathless. Altogether it was a unique and interesting program and well worth hearing.

**Wednesday 14th April.** This was my day of great expectations. The American Liberator was scheduled to leave - so we were out at the aerodrome at 9.30. The drome, by the way, is only a few miles from the city proper and would be not much further than our Fishermen’s Bend is from the city of Melbourne. After my experience of air travel I am satisfied that a lot can be said for placing the airports close to the cities, although I am aware of the danger of this plan in wartime. On our way
to the drome we passed a very fine stadium called the *Dynamo* and I would have liked to have seen the interior. From an outside view it seemed capable of accommodating many thousands of spectators.

The drome itself is a very large one and is entirely given up to military purposes. After placing our luggage on the plane and waiting for about an hour, we were told that the weather reports between Moscow and Kuibyshev were unfavourable, although in Moscow itself conditions for flying were perfect. However the weather advisers said no decision would be given before 1pm - so back we went to the city. For the want of something better to do, we went off to the stamp shop where we bought some more stamps. After a light lunch about noon, we went out again to the drome only to be told that no decision would be made before 1.30. So we returned, for the second time today, to our hotel. We decided to get in touch with the US Embassy at 1.30 and thus save ourselves a further trip out. At 1.30 we were told that a final decision would be made within an hour, however we doubt there is any prospect of leaving today. Our predictions are confirmed when we are told at 2pm that the plane would not leave today. It seems to us unfortunate, as the weather is so gloriously fine here but there are apparently difficulties at Kuibyshev.

We go for a long walk in the bright sunshine but find the hours dragging very slowly indeed as there is nothing whatever for us to do; nothing to read, no news to hear and no-one to see. It is easy to realise that we can become very lonely and isolated persons, even in a vast city of four million people. It is indeed very good fortune for us that the theatres still function; they are the meat and drink to our very existence here. So on this, our last night in Moscow, we go to our favourite theatre, the Filial, where we see another ballet we had not seen previously. It was called *Hunchback Horse* and was a kind of fairy story into which was woven silent acting, mimicry and exquisite dancing and music.

**Thursday 15th April.** Weather very dull and cloudy with a tendency to rain, so our prospects for leaving today appear none too bright. However, later in the morning we are told to go to the drome, as there is a prospect after all of our getting away. We go to the drome in one of the American cars and are told that we will leave at 1pm. The Liberator is appropriately called *Gulliver II*, and its name appears in both English and Russian. The plane has to be navigated by a Soviet airman, as is the case with every foreign plane flown in Russia. There is no doubt about the comfort of the plane, which has been converted from a bomber to a transport and has 12 comfortable seats.
The American Ambassador was a passenger to Kuibyshev, as he wanted
to go and say goodbye to Dooman, the Consular who is returning to the
States on account of ill health. Edgar Snow, who wrote Red Star over
China, was also a passenger on the plane and I had an interesting talk to
him. He has represented the Saturday Morning Post and is on his way
to Cairo. At 1.05 our giant four-engined plane was in the air and we
were quickly saying farewell to Moscow. The plane was flying very
steadily and the country we passed over alternated between forest and
farmlands, with hundreds of villages popping up all the way. As far as I
could see the lands were in good tilth and the soil appeared to be a good
strong black loam - I saw little light or poor soils. I concluded that if
these lands (over which we flew for some 600 miles) were at all typical
of the country generally then, with advanced methods of farming, there
could hardly be a limit to the number of people the country could carry.

In just about three hours we saw Kuibyshev and the Volga, which was
now free flowing and carrying ice fragments and floes down to the
Caspian. The last time we saw the river (less than a fortnight ago) it was
still, cold and silent - but now life was pulsating it with a slow rhythm
which will be quickened when the thaw becomes more general.

The pilot let the big plane down in brilliant style and we hardly felt it
touch the ground. We landed at a military drome with fine concrete
runways. Nearby, there are established various air production plants and
we saw many new fighter planes on the drome. In less than an hour we
were back at the legation and were welcomed by both the diplomatic
and domestic staff. We all had dinner in the mess together and it was
like old times. I suppose the excitement of leaving early next morning
was responsible for a sleepless night. I saw my last sunset over the
Volga.
Friday 16th April. We left early in the morning for the aerodrome with the weather looking favourable, but our reports had to come a long way, from south of the Caspian. There was quite a gathering at the drome to bid our party farewell. The US ambassador was there along with Keith Officer from our own legation, Baggallay and Grifford from the British Embassy and the Swedish Minister. At about 9 o’clock we got the OK that weather conditions all the way to Teheran were good but this news, as we ultimately discovered, was unreliable. A delay in the return of our passports held us up till 9.30, but we then went nicely into the air on our 1250 mile non-stop trip. This therefore was our farewell to the Soviet.

Kuibyshev looks a very orderly city from the air - in fact I think its appearance is better from the air than the ground. I leave it with no fault-finding or grumbling, except against the inactivity of my post which largely has accounted for my state of health and necessitates my leaving. From the air we get a good picture of the great war activity of this centre. When one sees all this industrial development, one readily understands the population figure of one million.

For a while we follow the course of the Volga and after a few hours we are at its delta. The cloud makes it impossible for us to see either Astrakhan or even Baku, so I am glad I had good views of these cities on my way in. Cloud conditions then developed badly for us and gave us a rough trip over or through the high mountains that stand sentinel to Iran. So we had passed out of the Soviet into Asia and the Middle East. We must have climbed to about 15,000 feet, as conditions became a little troublesome and one was inclined to get headachy and sick. However we got through the pass and then came out of the clouds.

It was not until we landed safely at the Teheran aerodrome that we heard first hand from the pilot what a dreadful time he had had - the worst, he claimed, in all his 15,000 hours of flying experience. It appears that a combination of untoward events occurred. Firstly, the weather reports issued before we left Kuibyshev were far too sanguine, as nasty cloud formations made flying over the mountains and through the gap very hazardous. Then the Soviet navigator refused to allow them to use the [radar] beam and the automatic pilot refused to work, which made manual pilotage necessary. Then one of the engines conked out and icing up conditions occurred. It was no wonder that the pilot
was elated when the machine was on the ground. He said to me “I never want another such experience”. He said that coming through the gap was like looking for the eye of a needle - and no needle being there. He has been a very sick man and I think the journey shook him up a lot. Very wisely he decided to rest at Teheran tomorrow and go on to Cairo on Sunday.

We go to the British Legation where our old friend Sir Aldous Ballard cordially greets us; he had read the wire sent from Kuibyshev telling him we were coming. It was pretty hot our landing ourselves on him, as he had a full house with some very high personages including the Minister for State, R.G. Casey, and the High Commissioner for Palestine, Sir Harold McMichael. I had a long talk with Casey, who has made arrangements for me to go the 15th Scottish Military Hospital at Cairo. Casey appeared to be in good form and is full of vigour, although I think he is aged somewhat since I last saw him in Australia a few years ago. He gave us the latest war news and asked for our impressions of Russia. He thought, in view of all the circumstances, that my decision to go home was the only possible one to make.

Everyone was going out to dinner, but Bill and I ate together in the legation. Parkes (the butler) scratched together a good meal for us, all of which (other than a couple of eggs, we heard) came out of tins. The food position remains very critical here and the Minister was saying that meat is very difficult to get (and then only at famine prices) as no price control has been set in operation. Considerable numbers of American soldiers, together with the Polish army, are here and this has aggravated what has been a serious problem for some time - at any moment the matter may have political repercussions. We were able to get to bed early and were glad because of our strenuous last days in Russia and our bad flight today.

**Saturday 17th April.** I had a splendid night’s rest. Bill has a heavy cold on him, so he remained in bed. Sir Harold McMichael went off north to the Caspian by road whilst Casey went south by car to Baghdad, where he proposes staying for a couple of days. It was a fine sunny spring day, so after breakfast I went for a short walk in the streets.

The Minister had three American Officers to lunch and we had a spirited discussion on Russia. The Minister is very anti the regime whilst I support it with certain reservations. I think the Americans enjoyed the discussion although they didn’t enter into it.

Later, Bill and I sat on chairs in the lovely grounds for a couple of hours
and it was a tonic for us both, as neither of us is well. The spring has brought the first timid blooms of the wisteria into blossom. Flowering fruit trees and the delightful purple Judas tree also told a different seasonal story from that which we bleakly saw when snow covered the place in December. Across the reflecting pool the shadows of the willows and other trees throw their bright vivid colours and magpies, pigeons and wrens occasionally come to the pool to drink. It was a quiet happy period to spend in such surroundings and the only blemish was the constant shrill tooting of strident motor horns in the streets which surround the legation.

My friend the Danish Minister asks me to have afternoon tea with him and his wife, so I go at 4.30 and spend two hours there. They were most anxious (as is almost everyone I see) to have my impressions of Russia and they plied me with many questions. I think they are fearful of the power Russia may have in the post-war world. I find my friend the British Minister Sir Aldous Ballard is markedly hostile to the Soviet and I couldn’t resist the chance of having several passages at arms with him. He spoke of the liberty that was the basis of the British way of life, but I said liberty was a meaningless thing to the hungry, homeless and unemployed man. I don’t think he quite appreciates my attitude towards the Soviet, but that doesn’t disturb me. If I had not been his guest I think my exchanges with him would have been more heated. We have a quiet talk with him in his study before we go to bed.

**Sunday 18th April.** We are advised to be at the aerodrome at 7.45 and, although we first go to the wrong aerodrome, we find ourselves with plenty of time as it is 8.30 before we are in the air en route to Cairo. For an hour and a half we fly over a series of rather high mountains. This is the range where Childs of the British Legation and 11 other passengers were killed only a couple of months ago. We got over the ranges safely and within a couple of hours were passing over Baghdad. Uninteresting desert country was flown over until we got down towards Palestine and then we had good views of the Dead Sea and the river Jordan and flew right across Jerusalem itself. Soon afterwards we were at the Mediterranean and then were flying over drab desert until we reached the Canal. Then followed more desert, and at 3.15 we were at Cairo.

There was a proper shock for me at the aerodrome, as I found a large ambulance waiting to take me to hospital. I quickly assured them I was a walking patient and went with Miss Gilrath and Captain Hastings (of Mr Casey’s staff) to the 15th Scottish General Hospital, where arrangements had been made some weeks ago for me. Here I was given
a room to myself and told by a sister to go to bed and await the doctor.

[My brother-in-law] Jim Steele came to see me and stayed for an hour. He said that he had felt all along I would not be able to adapt myself to the conditions of life in Moscow. He said the war position was going satisfactorily in Tunisia and that the area should be cleared by the middle of May. I am to take another letter back for him to [his sister] Meg who is in hospital in Melbourne. He also gave me all the news about Isabel’s wedding and said that they appeared to be very devoted to each other.

The doctor, Colonel Wallace, came to see and overhaul me and I should be thoroughly conversant with overhaul technique by now. He expressed a favourable view concerning my physical condition, but said that my nerves were bad and that there had been a great and growing drain on my nervous energy. Fortunately he said this had so far not affected my physical condition but, unless checked, it would rapidly do so. He said, having regard to what I had told him about conditions of life in Russia, that it would be dangerous from a health point of view for me to think of returning there and said I should go on in the American plane to the States. All the medical opinion is of the one mind and, although I appreciate Bert Evatt’s intense desire for me to make a further effort to stay in Russia, I think it must be ruled out. The conditions of life there are such that I could never adapt myself to them. However I hope to soon see Bert in Washington, where I can place the full facts before him.

I am made very comfortable in the hospital but tell them I think I am a bit of a fraud, as I will only be here for the night - the pilot proposes to push on to Khartoum at noon tomorrow.

**Monday 19th April.** Colonel Wallace again sees me and thinks it advisable to have an X-ray taken of my lungs and heart. I accordingly have it done and apparently the result is satisfactory. The Colonel still thinks I am wise to move on, although he would like to keep Bill and me both in hospital at least for a week. Bill has a heavy cold on him and I think it could even be the flu. They look after me very well in this 15th Scottish and when I ask for an account they scoff at me. It has been very generous of them.

Miss Gilrath is coming with Bill to take me off to the aerodrome at

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1 Apparently his explanation of his illness in terms of the conditions in Russia was later taken to be a criticism of the Soviet Regime- see April 29.
11am. Shortly before she comes I have a visit from General Rowell, who is AIF liaison officer in the Middle East. It will be remembered that he had a row with General Blamey - I don’t know the merits of it excepting that apparently all the world knows of it\(^2\). The General has asked me to tell Frank Forde that his [military] position is one of considerable importance and it will be increasingly so with the prospect of things happening in and around the Mediterranean and the Balkans (and perhaps Turkey in the near future).

We get to the drome at Heliopolis at 12. I have certainly seen very little of Cairo this time - not that I mind, as I can’t say I am enamoured of it. Our plane has Lord Halifax’s son on it as a passenger to Washington - he lost both his legs in the Libyan campaign. There is another British Officer with him who is in the same plight. We have a very good trip to Khartoum which we make in about five hours. We then rest until 10pm, when the pilot decides to push on to Accra and thus save crossing Africa in the heat of the day. I think the move a good one, although it means a rather tiring night. We have our dinner at the US mess and they put on a very good meal with types of vegetable I haven’t seen for some months. At 10pm sharp we are in the air again on our 2500 mile flight across West Africa to Accra.

**Tuesday 20\(^{th}\) April.** We arrived at Accra in just under 12 hours and the flight was smooth and enjoyable, although much sleep was impossible. We are resting the best part of the day in the US camp, which appears to be very efficiently organised and run. The meals seem to indicate a sound application of dietary principles, as vegetables and fruits play a big part in them. The General of the camp does me the honour of coming and having dinner at my table. He and the other US officers are very friendly. The weather is not too bad and although this place has rather a torrid reputation, a breeze from the Atlantic tempers the humidity.

**Wednesday 21\(^{st}\) April.** We are up early as we face a long flight across the Atlantic. We are to go direct to Natal and not, as is the usual custom, to call at Ascension Islands. At a little after 6am we are in the air with weather conditions good and the usual trade wind, which is blowing at 20 mph at our tail. We fly fairly high (9,000-10,000 feet); partly because of submarines and partly because of the more favourable flying conditions which allow more economic use of petrol. This flight

\(^2\) It seems Blamey had accused Rowell of incompetence in the fight for New Guinea.
is quite uneventful. We fly into one short storm which is rather fierce and causes us to lose 2000 feet of altitude. From time to time the cloud formations are most weird and beautiful. Sometimes you are on top of a great even mass of soft snow-like cloud while vast irregular cloud structures, for all the world like mountain peaks, hover above you.

And so the flight goes on and in the almost unimaginable time of less than 12 hours we make this crossing of approximately 2600 miles and land at Natal in Brazil, South America. We gain three hours in time so it is still light when we get there. We land at another of the US air camps, which are very big with every activity indicating an immensity of size and importance. Bill’s cold has not improved and I think it has developed into influenza, so he is feeling this strenuous trip very much. I also am tired and am feeling it but the general comfort of the plane eases our burden a good deal. The camp amenities are very good and are much better than those which we had when we were here last, when we stayed at the Grand Hotel.

**Thursday 22nd April.** Again we are up early, as we fly northwards today to Trinidad - in all about 2200 miles and a ten-hour journey. We pretty well hug the coast all the way, crossing the equator and passing the infamous prison and settlement of Devil’s Island in French Guiana. The vivid greens of some of the cultivated tropical regions stood out strongly. The trip was quite uneventful, so I borrowed a book from Lord Halifax’s son: *Garibaldi and the 1000* by Trevallyn which, interestingly enough, told of Garibaldi’s amazing campaign in Sicily in 1860. He was certainly one of the most fortunate generals in world history - how his small force of less than 3000 defeated the Neapolitans with 20,000 strong is certainly a romance.

We reach Trinidad about 4pm and stay in another of these mushroom camps. They are cut out of the jungle and put up almost overnight, but are characterised, all the same, by signs of efficiency and directness. They have a rule of making transients, as they call the travellers, stay in the camps and not visit the towns. Not that any of us, after a strenuous day’s flying, would wish to have more travel - and the camps are usually some distance out. Bill is still feeling off-colour, but is fighting his illness courageously.

In view of the fact that aircraft are coming and going at all hours of the day and night, the mess hut is open 24 hours a day, and this is also the case with most of the other camps. As we are to be up at 1am to leave on the last ambitious stage of the airplane’s journey tomorrow, Bill and
I go to bed at 7pm. Although we are in tropical regions, we have been strangely favoured in Accra, Natal and Trinidad with cool sea breezes, which have been very welcome indeed.

**Friday 23rd April.** The captain of our aircraft *Gulliver II* is Captain Klotz, a civil air pilot with many years flying experience, but who is now in the US air force. I find that he was the captain of *Gulliver I*, the Liberator which took Wendle Willkie on his famous 30,000 mile cruise last August. Klotz has apparently nurtured an ambition to create something like a record for this trip of ours and he certainly has pushed the wonderful craft along. Today his ambition is to fly from Trinidad to Washington, a distance of about 2600 miles, non-stop and in about 12 hours. It is interesting to observe that we have not made any intermediate landings for fuel, having gone long distances between various places.

Although scheduled to start at 2am, it is 2.30 before we are in the air as the limbless British soldiers are late. We are flying northwards up the Atlantic and are higher today than previously, being about 12,000 feet up. Weather conditions are again good. Dawn breaks about 5.30 and we see we are high over the water. There is nothing of interest until we pass over the small islands close to Puerto Rico and then we hug the coast off Santa Domingo [Dominican Republic] for some time. Then we go on out of the sight of land along the Atlantic coast of the States until we reach South Carolina, where we turn towards the west and, to the jubilation of Dooman and Duckman, we are over the firm, solid land of the States.

We pass, still at a good height, the farmlands of the Carolinas. The farms appear to be small in area and, whilst green crops are shooting everywhere, a lot of the land is brown and appears to be fallow. Well - we have seen from the air some of the world’s most fertile areas in the last week; firstly the rich black soils of Russia and the irrigated lands through the Middle East in Iran, Iraq, Palestine and the famous Nile delta. Then the rich tropical lands of West Africa and, on the other side of the Atlantic, the tropical areas of South America - and now the temperate areas of North America. What a range of soils, climates and methods of farming, industry and life have unfolded their characteristics to us within the space of a single week - and what a romantic story a gifted pen could write about it all.

Getting away from the Carolinas we pass over Virginia where the same type of farmland is seen, with big towns looming up here and there.
Then on to Maryland and the Potomac and we are conscious of journey’s end, for soon America’s famous and most beautiful city comes into view and we are over Washington. All the giant monuments of the city are below us and strangely enough they are all close together. They include: the first and the last erected of the Presidential memorials - Washington and Jefferson (so architecturally dissimilar); the exquisite Lincoln memorial; the domed Capitol; the old red brick Smithsonian Institute and the very modern and beautiful Mellon or National Gallery. We have a fleeting bird’s eye view of them all and, as I was familiar with them and could pick them out, it made a great impression on me. Like Moscow, Washington’s airport is practically within the city, which is a matter of very great convenience to air travellers.

It is a glorious spring day and we land at 3 o’clock, after a 12½ hour journey covering some 2,600 miles. Altogether we have only taken eight days since we left Moscow, having flown some 14,000 miles in 70 hours in the air, and creating some sort of record. Bill and I have stood the journey very well, particularly considering our sickness, but we are both feeling knocked out. Allen Watt of the Australian Legation meets us at the drome and we are soon at the Legation, where I am glad to meet Bert Evatt Sir Owen Dixon had left for Australia and Lady Dixon had taken the family away for a holiday.

I think Bert’s reception of me was rather cold. He appears to take the view that I should have remained at Cairo and had a rest, with a view to returning to Russia. But he has no understanding of my state of health and of the unequivocal views of the doctors as to the need for my return to Australia. He thinks my attitude will be an embarrassment to the Government, but I am unable to see how this can possibly be.

I only learn later on how splendidly Bill had anticipated this difficulty, and what he did to protect me when [in Moscow] he asked Dr Lang to give his view of my condition and how it would be effected by my return to Russia. [Bill then passed on this opinion] to Captain Hastings, who is Mr Casey’s military attaché in Cairo. I am leaving Bill to put this to Bert, but I very much fear that Bert has become somewhat hostile.

Mrs Evatt accompanied Bert, and I have a long and very friendly talk to

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3 Evatt cabled Hodgson on 6 May: “Slater’s sudden departure has undoubtedly given rise to rumours and suspicions voiced to me by (Russian Ambassador to USA) Litvinov”. It may have been such rumours that Evatt had in mind.
her. She recommends my having a complete rest and I therefore have a warm bath and am in bed by 6 o’clock. I am made very much at home and am given plenty of interesting books and magazines and get my dinner in bed. I think dinner must have been prepared by a dietician who knew of my vitamin deficiencies, as the dinner consisted of soup, grilled chicken and asparagus, spinach and potatoes.

**Saturday 24th April.** I stay in bed for breakfast, as ordered, and am getting the rest which is needed after our long journey. I go down to Bill’s hotel and find him still feeling the effects of our journey and his illness, which still persists. Staying with the Evatts at the Legation are Dr Coombs and Evatt’s secretary Dr Burton. W.S. Robinson has again come with him [Evatt] in some advisory capacity.

Bert has a round of engagements for the weekend in New York and they all go up by the 1 o’clock train. I am left alone in the legation with every comfort and an almost inexhaustible quantity of reading material, so I don’t mind. Bill comes back in the afternoon and we have dinner together. Then he goes back to his flat which has been lent to him by one of the legation staff - it is impossible to get into any of the hotels, as they are crowded out for Easter.

**Sunday 25th April.** It is a glorious spring day with a warm sun shining in a cloudless sky. I go for a short walk in the neighbourhood of the legation and the trees are all coming strongly into leaf. It looks to me from the appearance of the houses in this locality of Cleveland Avenue, that its inhabitants are of the upper-middle classes, as the homes are attractive and solid. Flowering trees are in their prime and are pretty but the lawns, measured by our standards, are poor and there is almost a complete absence of flowers or flowerbeds of any kinds. I don’t know what the reason is for this, unless there is something lacking in the soil - but this could easily be remedied by soil building and fertiliser.

As I walked through these streets on this beautiful morning, my mind travelled back a fortnight to my walks round some of the streets in Moscow and what a contrast stood out. Here were all the evidences of a life of comfort and ease - in Russia, on the contrary, life was hard and tough.

I am having a quiet, restful time at the legation and Mrs Evatt’s influence with the cook is very real, as I am getting the most nourishing of foods. I am also enjoying a good deal of reading and have read with much interest Willkie’s recent outstanding book on his recent trip to China. I must buy a copy of this outspoken work.
Monday 26th April. It is a delightful spring day and, although a holiday in Australia [Easter Monday], it is not so recognised here excepting that we see the odd picnic party - mainly of Negro families. I forgot to mention that Mr Watt had taken us for a delightful motor run yesterday afternoon. It was mainly along boulevards which ran through park areas, the trees of which were freshly in leaf. The white blossom of the dogwood and the pink of the wild cherry were very attractive.

In the afternoon Calvert (the chauffeur to the legation) took us out to Mount Vernon to see the most historic of all American homes - that of George Washington. It stands in its original grounds (some hundreds of acres) on a high point on the banks of the Potomac. Most of the original furnishings are still in the house and both the buildings and the furniture are in a remarkable state of preservation.

On our return from this historic spot we visited the Jefferson Memorial which was opened by President Roosevelt within the last fortnight. It is another of the many fine memorials in Washington - built in white marble, it has a domed and pillared structure with a life-sized figure of the third President. Some of his most noted sayings are emblazoned on the walls and one in relation to constitutional amendment and revision seemed to me to be so apt that I have written it down:

*I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions but laws and constitutions must go hand and hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed and more enlightened as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manners and opinions change with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times. We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him when a boy as civilised society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors.* - Thomas Jefferson, 1743-1826

Tuesday 27th April. Calvert tells us there is a good baseball game to be played today between Washington and Philadelphia, so we go off with him to see it. We get to the stadium at 2.30 and stay there until after 6pm. The game is played very skilfully and we see 15 innings by both sides without the score of a single run. Immediately after we left Philadelphia scored two runs and won the game. I am glad we saw the match, as we saw the professional top-notchers and some of the finer points of the game which one wouldn’t see in Australia.

Wednesday 28th April. I am still feeling the effects of my trouble and had another sleepless night despite all the rest, comfort and splendid
food that I am having here. In the afternoon Bill and I spend a couple of hours in the famous Mellon Gallery. There is no doubt about the manner in which Europe has been combed for masterpieces - here in the Mellon collection we see them from nearly every famous school.

**Thursday 29th April.** Mr Watt of the legation shows me a cable which is rather worrying. It attributes to me, in my interview with Colonel Wallace of the 15th Scottish Hospital at Cairo, the statement that I had been disillusioned with the Soviet regime and that when out of Russia had the same feelings as a prisoner out of gaol. I was amazed to see this as neither sentiment has ever been expressed or held by me. It is well known that I went to Russia as a warm admirer of the regime and I have left there with my admiration stimulated and strengthened by what I was able to observe and learn during my short stay there. How could any fair-minded person be disillusioned with the regime when he is conscious of the struggle and the sacrifices of all the people? However those who know me best know my views and feelings.

I go to Baltimore to see Professor [John] Whitehorn of the Psychiatric Department; the appointment was made possible by the courtesy of Professor Sigerist. Altogether I had nearly two hours with Professor Whitehorn, who didn’t hesitate to say that I should return home as soon as possible. He was cautious as to my future, but thinks I should go back to my old routine of life as speedily as possible.

After dinner I had a long frank talk with Bert Evatt. I indicated my great surprise about the telegram - the chief sentiments which Colonel Wallace has attributed to me are entirely without foundation. I unhesitatingly said that my admiration for the Russian people and the regime was more strongly based and held by me than ever before. Bert accepted my views and sent to the Prime Minister a repudiation of the statements attributed to me. Bert urged me not to submit an immediate resignation but to wait until his return home, and this I have agreed to do. He was also favourable to Bill returning with me.

**Friday 30th April.** I spend the morning quietly at the legation reading and writing. In the afternoon Bill and I go to the pictures but I am rather oppressed by them, as they were all war propaganda. I am sorry we didn’t see *Desert Victory* which factually records the story of the Libyan battles.

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4 Bill wrote to his wife; “Like you I [cursed] Blunden for sending home that cable from Moscow. I think Bert Evatt will also be annoyed when he hears it.”
Saturday 1st May. I get in touch with Mr Hacker and we have lunch together. We then go to Brellano’s (a renowned bookshop) where we buy a number of books and present each other with one. I give him Tolstoy’s immortal War and Peace and he gives me Scott’s Behind the Urals. I am putting books belonging to Ewart Norris and other friends of Mr Hacker’s together with my collection which are to go to Australia by sea. I discuss with Mr Watt the getting of priorities for air travel and have tentatively set down the 15th May as departure date; whether that materialises or not rests with the authorities. I propose going to New York with Mr Hacker by the midnight train tomorrow night.

Sunday 2nd May. I go and see Bill again and find he is picking up well, although I don’t think he is completely obeying the doctors orders, as he persists in getting up for his meals. Still if he rests for four or five days he should gather in some strength.

Bert rather throws a spanner in our arrangements by saying today that he doesn’t think Bill should return with me but should, when he gets better, return to Kuibyshev. This is rather unfortunate, as we both had banked on going back together, although we are conscious of the difficulties of priorities. I go and tell Bill and he is naturally rather upset over the position. I will try again and see if alteration can be made, as I am confident Bill’s health is now such that would make it unsafe to return to Russia. I have not seen too much of Washington this time, but have contented myself by resting as much as possible. I leave the legation at 10.30pm to catch the midnight train to New York.

Monday 3rd May. I arrive in New York about 7am with Mr Hacker and we go to the Barbizon Plaza Hotel where I am booked in. We have breakfast and then go for a walk down Madison Avenue - one of the most famous of New York’s streets. The luxury goods shops certainly stand out in contrast to the shops we saw in Moscow, but the impact of the struggle has not yet fallen on the people of the States as it has on the people of the Soviet.

I go and see Mr Hillway of the Australian War Supplies authority and get my travel program arranged to take me up through Canada to Vancouver and down from there to San Francisco. I have lunch with Mr

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5 Perhaps Evatt’s change of mind was due to the possibility of the Australian Legation taking over the work of the Polish Embassy after the USSR had severed relations with Poland on May 26 (see The Post War Years). Evatt cabled Hodgson on May 6: “Of course, our staff difficulties in Russia are very great indeed, as you well know...”
Hacker and some more Australian friends in the fine luncheon room on the 65th floor of the Rockefeller Centre building. From the dining room a splendid panorama of New York was obtained, particularly of Central Park.

After lunch I go for more walks round the city and then meet Mr Hacker at my hotel where we have dinner together. After dinner we go and see the film *Mission to Moscow*, which has such particular interest for me. I think the picture is good and should be a valuable propagandist one for the Soviet.

The threatened coal strike seemed finally to resolve itself into one of strategy between John L. Lewis and the President with honours about even, but I think the mass of the public opinion would be worked up against the miners.

**Tuesday 4th May.** I succeed in getting in touch with Rev. A.R. Osborn. He has a church in New York known as the Spring Street Church. He is greatly excited when I phone him and asks me over for lunch and I stay until about 11 at night. Mrs Osborn has aged somewhat, but has been very sick recently. The family has achieved much academic success; Rev. Osborn has his Doctorate of Divinity and his sons and daughters have also done well. Marion and Andrew are both Ph.Ds, Amy has her B.A., Leslie has become a lecturer in medicine and Gladstone, who is in England, is doing very well with pathology. Irma and Marion were there and they have not altered at all since I saw them in Australia. The family lives out at Mt Vernon, a very nice and quiet residential suburb. I very much enjoyed being with them and am to go out there again tomorrow.

**Wednesday 5th May.** I meet Irma Osborn and do some shopping with her. We lunch together and then go for a ferry trip across the Hudson River to Staten Island. We pass close to the famous Statue of Liberty and see plenty of shipping in the river, which is a fine wide stream. Coming back from Staten Island we get a good view of the mammoth buildings silhouetted against the skyline. I go out to the Osborns’ for dinner and spend a very happy evening - I get all the family news and have to take back home innumerable messages.

**Thursday 6th May.** I get down to the Australia War Procurements [AWP] Office to complete the plans for my return through Canada. I phone Allen Watt at Washington and am told I am unable to obtain an air priority so will have to return by sea. I am not disturbed about this, although some of the air priorities are rather strange. Anyhow if it is
vital for war personnel to get quickly to Australia, as it seems it is, then I have no claim whatever.

I also spoke to Bill Duncan who, after a rest in the States, is required to return to Russia. It will be a disappointment to both him and his people that he cannot return with me, but Bert Evatt takes the view that such a course might be misunderstood in Australia. As he is quickly recovering his health and has always evinced a desire to return to Russia, it is perhaps wise for this to happen.

I do some more shopping at Macy’s and then return to the AWP Office where I find everything in order for my train journeys. I find that the Osborns know Jean and Mrs Love, so I phone them up and take them to dinner before I catch my train to Niagara. We go to the Biltmore where, in addition to a good dinner being served, there is a wonderful skating exhibition given on a square no bigger than 15 by 15 feet. The Loves were very moved when I left and I think they envied me returning to Australia - Jean, who is making good progress with her singing, hopes to come out permanently very soon. I am rather tired when I get on the train at 10 to 9, but sleep rather well.

**Friday 7th May.** I wake up at 6.30am at Buffalo. It is a raw misty morning and I only see the outlines of the many vast industrial establishments. I wait in vain for Leslie Osborn, who had arranged to meet me, so I remain on the train and get off at Niagara Falls. I quickly walk to the falls in the pleasant spring air and realise from the trees that spring has come much earlier in Russia than here. Although there is a high wall of mist thrown up at the falls, I manage to get good views from both of the foot of the falls and the top. I see both the large falls and the walk round Goat Island enables me to see Horseshoe Falls and all the powerhouse plants which, strangely enough, are on the Canadian side of the river. A great stream of water pours over the cascades and I was delighted with what I saw at leisure on this calm, quiet spring morn.

I got on the train again at 12.26 and, after having my passport examined by the Canadian immigration people, crossed the river into Canada. Between the Falls and Toronto the country, which is all level, is given up entirely to vineyards and fruit and vegetable production. It reminded one greatly of the Murray Valley. The orchards were generally well cared for, although it appeared that only women and girls and some old men were working in them. I saw great activity in vegetable production and it reminded me of Russia where, when I left, they were preparing
the soil for vegetables.

We passed through Hamilton, which at once made me think of our own Hamilton in Victoria, although its Canadian namesake is a large thriving town with a fine number of Industrial plants. Toronto is one of Canada’s big cities and it links up much of the rail and lake transport of the Dominion. It is a busy, clean town and stands on the shores of Lake Ontario.

I meet Mr Ellen, an Australian who is in charge of the Australian War Supplies. He took me to his house and afterwards to dinner at the Granite Club, which is magnificently equipped. Altogether the day was too much for me and I was completely knocked out when I boarded the train at 10pm on my now non-stop run to Vancouver. I am very lucky to have a compartment (termed a drawing room) to myself.

Saturday 8th May. Despite the rather rough running of the train (my compartment is right over the wheels), I manage to get a fair night’s rest. I wake to find the train running through picturesque country dotted with lakes, with fir and birch trees right to the water’s edge. All day long and for hundreds of miles we travelled through this interesting pleasant scenery and, as the day wore on, the shadows of the lovely trees were reflected in the deep, dark waters of the lakes.

I noticed an interesting stencilled note on one of the carriages which indicated that the Canadian National Railways, or rather its rolling stock, was in the hands of the Chase Manhattan Bank of New York, the trustee for the receivers. It seemed to me to be rather shabby to advertise to the world the mortgage indebtedness of the railway service.

Sunday 9th May. Still on the way but a long way to go yet. I have another good night on the train and when I wake I find that we have left the fairylands of lakes and trees and are now out on the prairies - the wheatlands of Manitoba. I find that spring is very much later here than it was in Russia and, although I had seen bright green crops emerging through the freshly thawed soils in Russia, I saw no shooting crops here at any point. The soils are jet black and nice and friable as they are in the Wimmera, and I can well understand how these regions are world famous for wheat production. Still they must have heavy transport charges, as Winnipeg is more that 1000 miles from Montreal.

We stop for an hour at Winnipeg - it is the largest prairie town and looks comfortable and prosperous. I believe it has one of the most severe climates in Canada, but today the air was cool and refreshing after the train.
From Manitoba we pass into the province of Saskatchewan - still a prairie province and a centre of much wheat production. It is rather cold here and snow is gently falling. I thought I had seen the last of it when I was in Russia. I saw one of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police on the train in his bright leggings, blue trousers and scarlet coat. The get up is very attractive but hardly utilitarian.

Monday 10th May. Had another good night despite pretty rough travelling. The train reaches Edmonton before 7 o’clock in the morning. I am anxious to have a look at the capital of Alberta province for two reasons. Firstly because it was here that Rev. Osborn came to from Victoria some 16 years ago and apparently he did very well. Secondly this is the province over which Premier Aberhart reigns - it will be remembered that he has had to introduce social credit, but with chequered results.

After leaving Edmonton we continue across the prairie lands with the good black soils still being in evidence. There seems to be hundreds of miles of these rich lands, but I have no idea how far north or south of the railway the good lands extend.

Now the character of the country changes and the prairie gives way to undulating forest country of fir and birch, with numerous lakes adding to the beauty. It is interesting and pleasant scenery and an interlude is provided by a fall of snow on the higher levels to which we are climbing. The fir trees look fascinating, with the snow balanced on the branches and delicately bending them down as if they were scales. Then there bursts upon us the outlines of the snow-clad Rockies. For the best part of the day we travel past the grandeur of this scenery - probably, from a railway traveller’s view, among the finest in the world. The mountains are so high as to be free of vegetation or timber and they seem very rocky, as their name suggests. Rivers, waterfalls and lakes all abound and add to the wonder of it all.

On the western side of the mountains, redwood trees appear for the first time and we pass miles and miles of these beautiful tall trees. Here and there timber camps indicate that the forests are being worked. What with the wealth of the prairie lands and these vast forests, Canada certainly is a country with an assurance of natural wealth. I observed that on the west or Pacific side of the mountains the season is more advanced. The birch trees were proudly throwing out their yellowish-green tendrils, making an admirable colour blend with the dark green firs that were their main companions in the forest.
Tuesday 11th May. I pass one of my most wretched nights. It was contributed to by the rocking and jolting of the carriage and the sharpness with which the train started and stopped. The train pulled in to Vancouver at 8.35am. This was exactly on time, a very good performance when you consider the distance covered was just under 3000 miles. After my bad night I decide it wise to go to a hotel for a bath and rest, so I go to the Vancouver Hotel - which is magnificently appointed - and I enjoy a warm bath and good rest for the remainder of the morning.

After lunch the clouds bank up strongly indicating heavy rain later, so I take advantage of the fine weather now to take a tram ride round the city. Like all the other large Canadian cities I have seen, this one seems solid with a good sprinkling of industries. It has the big advantage also of being Canada’s Pacific port and I would say was a very busy one. I saw a good deal of the city from the tram, which takes a circuitous route. I had no sooner finished my tram ride when the storm broke and it poured with rain; fortunately I was back at the hotel.

I had an interesting experience when waiting for my train to go down to Seattle - I saw a number of Australian airmen who had apparently just arrived and - lo and behold - one of them recognised me. His name was Bolger and he comes from the Hamilton district.

My train left at 5.15 on my southward run and very soon we were at the US border at a place called Blaine. The usual customs and immigration check-ups were made. The country through which we ran, both in Canada and the States, was fresh and green and here and there indentations of the Pacific came right up to the line.

Wednesday 12th May. It was after 11 o’clock last night when we changed trains at Seattle and I got in my sleeper, but I had a wonderful night’s rest and when I woke at 10.30 we were well into the States. We passed through fascinating country with pretty villages, all of which were blossoming with spring. Plots were prepared for vegetables everywhere and they all seemed to be under lovely shady trees. I don’t think any part of the USA so impressed me by its quiet rural beauty as did Washington State and Oregon.

Later in the day we commenced a climb into the American Rockies and our ascent was much greater than that which we made in Canada. We climbed to just under 5000 feet - the grades were excellent and the train ran most smoothly. The forests were of redwood and what giants they were. I think they justify their claim to being among the most beautiful
trees in the world. I assume they are replanting the forests, as they seem to be milling the trees at numerous points all along the line. There was some snow about but not nearly as much as there was in Canada. There was great travelling pressure on the train, mainly by servicemen, and the dining car was only able to serve two meals a day. Breakfast lasted until noon and then dinner started at 4pm and went on, I presume, until the food supply ran out. They adopt the right policy of serving the soldiers and sailors first, so we had to wait a fair time before our turn came.

**Thursday 13th May.** When I open my blinds in the morning, I see many aspects of the countryside which remind me of Australia - so I know we are in California. We are not very far from San Francisco. The gum trees (actually not the wonderful varieties we have), the soil, the orchards - all were typical of ours and I rejoiced because it made me feel I was home. I saw some rather large-scale vegetable farms, particularly in asparagus and strawberries. Farming methods appeared very progressive and almost exclusive use was made of tractors - in fact I saw no horses used anywhere. Many cereal crops were well advanced, particularly barley and wheat.

Soon we were in the environs of San Francisco and it is an immense city alright. A large number of captive balloons were protecting some important part. When we alight from the train we cross the bay and go under the famous Oakland bridge. Just in front of our ferry steamer I see a nice Swedish boat [the *Parrakoola*] which, later in the day, I ascertain is the boat I am to return to Australia on. It had just come from being overhauled in the dry dock.

It is a delightful spring day and I am glad to get some air and sun after spending a week in trains. I go and get all my luggage, which has come through safely from New York, and then get to the hotel where a warm bath and a change into clean clothes have a good effect. Afterwards I call at the Australian War Procurements Office and get a wire from my dearest one indicating that she and the family were well and patiently awaiting my return. It cheered me up a good deal. I also completed all arrangements about the boat which is expected to leave a southern port in about a week’s time. Accordingly I arranged to leave for Los Angeles tomorrow. I also had to make contact with Dr Meyer, whom we met when here in November, but found he was attending a medical conference at Detroit.

**Friday 14th May.** I had one of my very worst nights last night and
hardly slept. I suffered from frequent muscular spasms which, together with my nerves, made the night one of misery for me. To cap it all, a crank in the adjoining room put on a wireless at 12.30 and kept it going for an hour despite my frequent loud protests. I will not be sorry to leave the hotel today.

As I was unable to see our old friend Dr Meyer, I saw another doctor whom his secretary recommended. He couldn’t help me very much saying that, in effect, he agreed with the opinions of the other medical men I had consulted. However in view of my sleeplessness he prescribed a draught - tumerol I think he said it was - and I took one before going to my berth on the train. The next thing I knew I was in Los Angeles, so there is no doubt about the potency of these tablets.

The train from San Francisco to Los Angeles is, I think, the smoothest running and best-equipped train I have ever travelled on. It has every degree of comfort and there is a long lounge bar and dining room combined, which is equivalent in space to three ordinary carriages.

Whilst sitting in this lounge we were able to hear Mr Churchill’s broadcast from Washington. I knew I would have had no chance of seeing either Churchill or Roosevelt had I still been in Washington, but it would have been interesting to have had the chance of seeing them and discussing things - particularly Russia - with them. I think I could have given them a point of view which they probably would not have got from anyone else. I see Bert Evatt has already been in consultation with Churchill.

**Saturday 15th May.** My friends in the Australian War Supplies Office at San Francisco have certainly looked after me well. They have secured accommodation for me at the Ambassadors Hotel, which is simply a wonder home. The hotel is out of the city proper and is really a small self-contained community. Glorious grounds surround the hotel and there are miniature golf links, tennis courts and a swimming pool. Over all, there hangs an atmosphere of quiet and rest here, with no whine of motor or traffic noises. My room looks out on well-kept flowerbeds and I see petunias and phlox in full blossom. Inside the hotel there are dancing rooms, an arcade of shops and even a picture theatre, so one has the means of satisfying all needs. I forgot to say that when I awoke in my sleeper and pulled up the blind, the first thing I saw was a large pepper tree and I thought I was back again in Mildura.

I spent a good deal of the day basking and sleeping in the warm sun and now I felt I was back again in North Queensland. Later in the day Mr
Boehm, the Australian who manages the local agency of the War Supplies, took me for a most interesting drive round the Beverly Hills where we saw the mansions of the [moving] picture lords and ladies. Name after name he mentioned to me, but I am afraid they fell on sterile soil, as I am unfamiliar with them all - but the homes were certainly very beautiful.

Further on our trip we saw the ranch and home which Will Rogers had bequeathed to the State (he also gave his polo field). We came down to the Pacific at Santa Monica and then returned to Los Angeles via the Pacific Highway. From the Beverly Hills we got a fine panoramic view of the country and could see all the picture studios and, away to the west, the derricks of many oilwells. It is a queer combination here of glamour and industry. The large aircraft and ship building industries contrast with the picture industry, the fame of which is worldwide.

In the course of our drive I saw some of the markets and the display of fruits and vegetables was most striking. The markets were easily the cleanest and most orderly that I have ever seen.

I have formed a keen friendship with Mr Milligan who is to be my room-mate on board the boat for our trip home. After dinner he and I go the picture show in the hotel. It is just a show and doesn’t make much of an appeal to either of us, but it helps pass the night.

**Sunday 16th May.** It is another bright, warm sunny day and I spend it mostly outdoors walking round the grounds and watching the golf and tennis.

**Monday 17th May.** Weather still perfect and I am feeling much benefited by being here. Mr Boehm takes me and Air Marshal [Adrian] Cole out to the Douglas air works and we meet Mr Douglas himself. He is a man of strong facial characteristics and one doesn’t wonder that he is the leader of the great enterprises associated with his name. We see work on the assembly lines and then are shown work on the newest DC4, a large transport plane. I believe there are 80,000 employees, of whom 60 percent are women, but they are not all working on the plant I saw. We also visit other establishments where similar work is being carried out, and everywhere work was proceeding at a high pitch. The conditions in the Douglas plant appeared to be very good and there was plenty of air and light in the vast workshops. I am sorry I had no chance of seeing any of the Soviet plants when I was in Russia, as it would have given me opportunities of comparison. The drive back to our hotel passes one of the oil fields where plenty of derricks were seen.
Tuesday 18th May. Another warm pleasant day. I have a great thrill as an old Try Boy pal of 35 years ago, Charley Miller, comes and spends the morning with me and we relive again our boyhood years. We talked of our old cricket and football teams and battles long ago and of our cheerfulness in meeting many of the difficulties that then faced us. Charley came to the States in 1912 and served with the Canadian forces in World War 1. He is of course now an American citizen, but his heart is very much in Australia. He has a son who is in the US Marines serving somewhere in the South West Pacific. Charley lived for years in Chicago but came here to see his son when he joined the marines and get work himself in the shipbuilding yards, where he is still employed. I told him all about the changes he might see in Melbourne (South Yarra in particular) if he returned to Australia and I have a host of messages to take to his old comrades of boyhood days.

I went into the city in the afternoon and spent an hour with Mr Boehm. In return for his many kindnesses to me I invited Mrs Boehm and him to dinner at the hotel.

We have now found out that the boat is further delayed and is not now expected to leave before Monday at the earliest. The news of the outrageous sinking by the Japs of the hospital ship Centaur amazes us 6.

Wednesday 19th May. A warm day quite like a typical summer day in Australia. At 9.30 I listen to Churchill’s speech to Congress. I thought the speech was a mixture of quality - at times he rose to great heights, but at other moments he was not quite so assured. I think his references to the determination to put Japan in ashes should placate those parts of the States where disagreement exists over the allied strategical plans of beating Hitler first. There is very strong anti-Jap feeling here, which is of course quite natural having regard to its geographical position.

My friend George Boehm again gave me a good day and we went out through Hollywood to the Lockheed aircraft plant. At the suburb of Hollywood we stopped for lunch, which we had at a little café which served us with, I think, the most delightful lunch I have had since I left Australia. George knows the proprietress and she certainly is a most proficient woman and her café is a most delightful one.

The Lockheed plant is well camouflaged and there are many thousands of employees; women again being present in great numbers. These are

6 On May 14, a Japanese submarine torpedoed the Centaur, brilliantly lit and painted with red crosses, 38 km from Stradbroke Island. Only 64 of the 332 on board survived.
not fabrication plants but rather assembly centres, the thousand and one parts of the various types of planes being pre-fabricated all over the States. The whole set-up appears most efficient and the light and air and general working conditions appear good. Three shifts are worked: two shifts of eight hours each and the third of six hours (it is termed the graveyard shift, as it is worked between midnight and 6am).

On our way back to the city, we stopped to visit one of the most interesting burial grounds in all the world. It is known as Forest Lawn and consists of about 300 acres of undulating ground splendidly planted with trees. There are no headstones anywhere and the graves have simply a small flat metal cover on which the names and particulars of the interred are inscribed. There are several magnificent mausoleums and chapels, and in one of the chapels there is a stained glass window depicting the Last Supper. It is said that Italian artists took seven years to complete this window and I certainly think it is one of the finest in the world. There is also an exquisite garden called the Mystery of Life in which a magnificent group of marble symbolic figurings represent the mystery of life, and all the time from some hidden musical instruments there is played the tune of *Oh Sweet Mystery of Life*. A giant figure in marble of David and a vast monument on the brow of the hill (which is, I believe, a monument to the many actors and actresses buried or cremated in this wonderful burial ground) were also interesting features.

When I got back to the hotel I went for a swim in the beautiful pool that is in the grounds and took advantage of a little sunbathing as well. Mr Boehm takes me out to a private picture show after dinner, when I see a good screening of *South Africa* with an explanatory lecture. We left a little before 12, but I believe the party and the pictures would go on until 2 or 3 in the morning.

**Thursday 20th May.** It is my birthday but unfortunately there is no one near and dear to me to wish me many happy returns of the day.

I go into the city and am almost persuaded to buy the latest edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, which I can get for $173 [now A$2200]. But Mr Boehm suggests I defer buying it until I see how the price is in Australia and then, if I think it is worth buying, he will get it for me. I think his suggestion is a good one.

He has arranged for us to pay a visit to Warner Brothers studio at Hollywood and we are invited to have lunch there. We meet many of the producers at the luncheon and afterwards are shown round the vast plant and apparatus. We saw how and where the pictures are made and
the wealth of detail is enormous. Unfortunately we were unable to see any pictures in actual production, as none were at the moment being “shot” as they describe it. I am satisfied that the technical background in the industry is very intense and detailed. I have another swim and sunbathe when I return to the hotel.

I saw Sir George Wales, ex Lord Mayor of Melbourne, who will be returning on our boat. He is also staying here at the Ambassadors; Ernie Turnbull of Hoyts Pictures is also here.

**Friday 21st May.** I go in to the city to do a little shopping, after which Mr and Mrs Boehm take me out to Hollywood again, where we have lunch at a nice little café. We then go on to the Fox studios - it is another vast place and its plant, etc must be valued at many millions of dollars. We see a number of sets (scenes), but unfortunately nothing is in action. Part of an ice-skating scene however was in progress and generally we were able to see how the vast mechanism of picture production functions. I couldn’t help thinking of the vast wealth which pours into California from many parts of the world for two so completely dissimilar industries as pictures and oil. Motor cars and ships are also extensively produced. It is no wonder that pictures can be produced so well, as the climate is very good and it is practically rainless for nine months of the year, so the light and air are consistently clear and good.

On our return trip home we visited the “Farmers” market and it, like all the others, is a model for high quality produce, for order and great cleanliness. I wish many of our market inspectors could come to California, as I think many lessons could be learnt.

**Saturday 22nd May.** Weather still warm, although mornings are hazy. I rest most of the morning and have a swim and sunbathe before lunch. In the afternoon Mr Milligan and I go to a baseball game between Los Angeles and Hollywood, but it is not up to the standard of the game I saw at Washington. We are now told that we may get on the boat on Tuesday night and leave early Wednesday and I hope the news is right.

**Sunday 23rd May.** I rest all the morning and in the afternoon our good friend Mr Boehm takes Mr Milligan and me for a long drive over to Sunland, which is in the Sierra ranges about 20 miles away. There we meet a Mr Don Campbell and his mother. Mr Campbell recently married Mrs Reg Ansett and is returning to Australia on the same boat as we are. It was most singular this meeting, as earlier in the day I had met Reg Ansett, who flew from Australia last week.
We spent a very pleasant couple of hours at this home and Mr Boehm took some moving pictures. He managed to get a picture of a humming bird sitting on its nest. They are very small quaint birds and it was the first time I had seen one.

On our trip out we went in to that marvellous burial ground at Forest Lawn. There Mr Boehm took more pictures in the Garden of *The Mystery of Life* where there are some fine sculptures. On our return from Sunland we passed a great rocky river bed. It is dry now but in the wet season, when the waters stream down from the Sierras, it becomes a raging torrent. Further down the stream a great dam has been built and this impounds the storm waters, which are then used to irrigate the citrus lands through which we passed. It was strange to see no fences around the citrus blocks - boys must be very unusual over here.

We also saw the famous Hollywood Bowl - a great amphitheatre which probably seats 70,000 people. It is carved out of a hill and there is a large stage with remarkable sounding boards, thus making the acoustic properties very good. I believe the Easter Church celebrations at the Bowl are the most extraordinary in all America. Altogether we had a most interesting and entertaining afternoon.

**Monday 24th May.** I go into the city in the morning and do the last of my shopping, as all reports seem to indicate that we are to embark tomorrow afternoon. I think the prices of almost everything one can buy are much higher than they are in Australia, and there is added to one’s purchase both State and Federal taxes. There is no doubt that living expenses are much higher here than almost anywhere in the world.

I spend most of the afternoon with Reg Ansett and he shows me very interesting pictures of the work his companies are doing in Australia. His trip here and to England should be of the greatest advantage to him.

**Tuesday 25th May.** I go into the city and finish some shopping. It now appears certain that we will embark today, and at 4pm George Boehm calls to take me to the boat. We have to go by car about 30 miles to the port at San Pedro. For a great part of the distance we travel through vast oil fields which are by far the most extensive I have ever seen; even more so than those of Baku in Russia. It is a very strange sight to see these forests of oil derricks with their slow working rhythmic pumps - and yet hardly a person anywhere in sight. Oil getting is apparently a highly mechanised industry. The oil derricks go right to the water’s edge.

The captain of the boat has invited George and Mrs Boehm to dinner
[before the other passengers embark]. I find the cabin allotted to Mr Milligan and me very good. It is up on deck and there is a large window through which we can get plenty of air. The appointments on the boat are quite adequate, although one bathroom to the 12 or so male passengers is hardly sufficient. I find that there are 10 or 12 American Red Cross women coming with us to Australia.

**Wednesday 26th May.** I had a fairly good night’s rest despite the noise of the engines of the boat and that of the men working to get the aeroplanes on board. We were told last night that it would be 10.30 in the morning before we left, as the immigration authorities had to check us over. It was just on 11am when the pilot boarded the boat and we turned into the stream and went down into the small harbour, with Long Beach on one side and Wilmington on the other. This harbour is apparently deep and safe and has frequently held a great part of the American Navy. The entrance to the harbour is very narrow and is protected with booms. Soon we were through the harbour and in the Pacific, across the vast waters of which we were now to sail.

And so I was saying farewell to the States. One is impressed by the development of the country and of the efficiency and magnitude of many of its industries, but to me - a radical - come fears and apprehensions as to the future of those who are of the left. I see all the fertile seeds of fascism in this country and I believe that a terrible struggle will await the radicals and progressives in the post-war period. Unlike us, there is no active labour party that can buffer and resist fascist tendencies and the disunity of industrial labour is tragic. At the time I write this note John L. Lewis is endeavouring to bring the mine workers back to the American Federation of Labor but I think the move is done more as a matter of spleen against his successor Philip Murray (of the Congress of Industrial Organisations) than of any real desire to consolidate labour. The attitude of most to the press is one of great hostility to the communist and left parties and it is not a hopeful sign of any real co-operation between the capitalist classes of the country and Russia after the war. Not that, in my opinion, Russia will require any co-operation, only in the sense that she desires help from all free peoples to save mankind from the dread peril of fascism.

The weather is calm with clouded skies and from time to time we see aircraft which patrol the coastline to protect the shipping lanes. Soon we pass Catalina Island - a rocky island some 30 miles from the coast. Chewing gum makers Wrigley built some kind of a castle on this island, and a few years ago organised swimming contests between the island
and the mainland - the longest swimming events of the world. Some of the movie world stars have given the island an air of exclusiveness as a holiday resort.

The day passes rather uneventfully. We see plenty of flying fish and a few shoals of porpoise. As there are so few of us on board - in all I think 25 passengers with a crew of 47 - it is not crowded. Although deck space is somewhat limited, there is ample room to get a decent walk, which will be my only exercise for the next few weeks. There is a bit of a swell on the sea and some movement of the boat, but it is hardly sufficient to make anyone unwell. The meals are very good and to serve chicken and beans and strawberries for dinner was a good effort. The bunks in the cabins are comfortable and I am quite happy about everything and certainly think the trip should be more restful than going by air.

**Thursday 27th May.** I had a good night’s rest, although the ship got into rougher waters during the night. The day is pleasant - neither hot nor cold - with a moderate sea and clouded sky and I spend most of it in walking and reading. I am glad I have brought an abundance of reading matter with me, as it will help the journey to pass. There is nothing to do on the boat but read, walk, talk and eat.

**Friday 28th May.** Had another bad night but daresay it is the motion of the ship. Weather is still calm and the journey pleasant and uneventful. There is general eagerness to reach Australia, but all are agreed it will take 21 days at the least as the speed is about 13.6 knots.

**Saturday 29th May.** It seems futile to make any diary notes, as one day follows another with very much the same routine. Skies have remained cloudy but seas have not been rough. The boat is comfortable and the food good but the desire of us all is that we cannot get back home soon enough.

We had a diversion today when a ship passed us a few miles to our right, sailing apparently from the south west Pacific back to the States. I am enjoying reading a splendid biography of Clarence Darrow, the eminent American lawyer.

**Sunday 30th May.** Weather still cloudy and seas a little choppy, but the ship rides well and there is not very much movement. I am being inducted into the mysteries of contact bridge. I had some good games last night which continued until midnight and enabled a few hours to run by. One of the American Red Cross women had a birthday yesterday and it was celebrated with a bottle of champagne and at
dinner the chef served up rather good birthday cakes. The meals on the boat are excellent - the food is good and is well cooked and served.

**Monday 31st May.** Weather again cloudy and, as we are now in the tropics, the cloud condition reduces the heat so our trip is made more pleasant. I had some more contact bridge last night and it helped pass away a few hours.

**Tuesday 1st June.** Weather much warmer and we cannot be far from the equator. It is not unpleasant, as there is cloud and some wind. We’ve been on the boat nearly a week so the time is passing. The Swedish Officers are interesting in their descriptions of their world travels.

At night we play what is known as a “race game”. On the dining room table a large board is prepared with six figures representing horses. At first the horses are auctioned and some of them brought as much as four dollars. The pool derived from the sale of the horses is then given to the owner of the winning horse. Tote tickets are then sold and you back your fancy of the six horses. Two dice are used - the first indicates the number of the horse that moves and the second indicates the number of spaces it moves up the track. Tote proceeds are then distributed among those who back the winner. Altogether four races were run and much interest created. It was easy to pick out from our passengers those who had any gambling instincts, although it was impossible to win or lose very much money. I didn’t bother about buying a horse but had a few bets on the tote and came out winning a couple of dollars.

After the game a rather tense discussion took place among the American Red Cross people about President Roosevelt. I was surprised to find that most of the Red Cross women were anti-Roosevelt, although the two officers were strongly pro-Roosevelt. Trends appear to suggest that, if Roosevelt stands next year for a fourth term, he will have a rather difficult task to win, as the West and Mid-West appear to be most hostile.

**Wednesday 2nd June.** Weather is warming up as we are nearing the equator, but a southeasterly breeze is keeping the temperature down a little. I spend most of the day reading and walking, and today I played a few games of deck quoits, which is a good exercise. I finished Darrow’s book having enjoyed every line of it. I also read Hickenbacker’s description of his amazing experiences when his plane went down in the Pacific - probably not far from where our ship is quietly making its way. Am now starting on Brown’s *Suez to Singapore* - a book which I have
heard has been banned in Australia, but for what reason I am so far quite at a loss to know. Censorship is a dreadful barnacle on free thought.

**Thursday 3rd June.** This is a day of diversions - first of all our deck quoits competition takes place. There are two series of games - men’s doubles and mixed doubles. I am drawn with Mr Plowman and we win our first game against Captain Reinhalt (the ship’s skipper) and a Mr Berry. I am afraid I am rather a dud at it, as I have not played before. In the mixed doubles I let my partner down - a Miss Barker of the Red Cross - as I play very badly. Also we have the misfortune to be drawn against Mr Sleigh, who is one of the best players on the boat.

As we “cross the line” at about 5.30 in the afternoon, the Captain turns on a cocktail party at 6 o’clock. I satisfy myself with soda water, as neither the cocktails nor the olives make much appeal to me. After the party we all have dinner *a la* buffet. There is a great and most varied collection of dishes of food, the preparation of which must have kept the chef busy all day. I selected the salads and salmon - I have taken quite a fancy to this fine American fish which in Australia we only see in the tin.

As it is a very close night, I spend an hour or so sitting on the deck with the Captain but I rather disgrace myself by going to sleep and when I awoke I found the Captain missing. I must look for him tomorrow morning to make my apologies. We have crossed the line now and the Southern Cross shines out in the starry heavens, ever beckoning us home.

**Friday 4th June.** We are still in the tropics and the weather is close and steamy, although on the decks and under the shade of the awnings it is nice and pleasant to read. The ship’s captain has invited me to use his special deck and chair, but I am not likely to avail myself of his offer, as there is always plenty of room on the general top deck.

Sleep was a little difficult owing to the heat, despite the fact that we are on the windward side of the ship and had our cabin window wide open. We won our second game in the deck quoits tournament and play in the final game tomorrow.

**Saturday 5th June.** Although we have left the equator well behind, the weather remains close and steamy. Still there is no room for complaints as the journey remains very pleasant. Played our final quoits game today and we were defeated 2-1. I am afraid I was the weak link on my side, which was only to be expected owing to my lack of experience in
the game. The winners had to donate their winnings towards the cocktail party which preceded dinner, and as one of the losers I had to propose a toast to the winners. These last few nights have found nearly everyone sitting out on the deck after dinner, as it has been so hot indoors.

**Sunday 6th June.** Weather continues to be most pleasant with a sufficient ocean swell to move the boat about. I had a most delightful morning in the Captain’s cabin listening to some of his fine gramophone records, among which were some of *Swan Lake*. He is most keen on symphonic music and has records of all the great masters. The playing of the *Swan Lake* records took me quickly back to Russia and I lived again in the memory of those amazing nights when I saw this most exquisite ballet. The Captain also let me look at some musical biographies and I learnt something of the life of Tchaikovsky. Reading in the afternoon and some more bridge at night and thus another day has passed.

**Monday 7th June.** Although we are leaving the tropics and are getting into South Pacific waters, the seas are calm and the weather pleasant. I am tempted to do a little sunbathing but, as I don’t want to get sunburnt, I resist the temptation. I finish Sinclair-Lewis’s latest novel *Gideon Planish* and, although it is a worthwhile attempt to de-bunk organised philanthropy, I do not feel that he sustains the heights he attained in his earlier works.

A few games of deck quoits, some hours of reading interspersed by walks round the decks, and at night again more bridge - so the day is spent. I also had a visit to the kitchens where the staff of chef and three cooks looks after us 25 passengers plus the crew of 47. It was a very well kept, clean galley and we are all impressed by the efficiency of the chef, as no one could possibly complain about the meals. The standard of the food used is particularly high.

I also went forward to the bow of the ship and sat right on the very nose watching the sapphire blue waters of the Pacific break apart as the bow thrust them aside.

**Tuesday 8th June.** Weather remains good despite the fact that we are pushing southwards. Time is beginning to drag and it is now a fortnight since we got on the ship at Los Angeles. Spent the best part of the day reading and lazing in the sun on the boat deck. At night we have some quiz competitions in which I didn’t shine, but I nearly won the $10 [A$130] jackpot in the final geography questions. We were asked where
Mt Ararat was and I first wrote Turkey (which is correct) and then altered it to Syria. However I ultimately shared the prize, my share being $1.85. Lady Wales managed to get the whole of the $32 [A$410] (the proceeds of the deck quoits championship) for the Sutherland Homes. I am the trustee of the money and have to send it on to Mrs Wenborn when I get to Melbourne.

**Wednesday 9th June.** Weather remains amazingly good and pleasant and it is doing a lot to relieve the monotony of the journey. We are now well down the Australian coast - although some thousands of miles to the east of our continent, apparently moving down in the direction of New Zealand.

I had another bad night with a return of my nerve trouble, so I certainly will not be sorry when Sydney Harbour looms in view. I spent most of the day reading, playing deck quoits and lazing in the nice warm sunshine. I am reading with great interest a book by Rhys Williams on Russia and it is quite one of the best I have read. He is an American author who is very familiar with Russian life and conditions and, as the book has only recently been published, its facts are right up to date. Had some auction bridge at night.

**Thursday 10th June.** Wake up to find a strong westerly blowing almost a gale but the ship rides well and I feel no discomfort. The day is spent very much like its predecessors reading and walking interspersed with meals. The question of tipping has been discussed. I have suggested that, in addition to our tipping the waiters and room stewards, we should each put in a dollar for the kitchen staff, who have done a very good job for us. My suggestion is well received and will be acted upon.

**Saturday 12th June.** This is the strange period of the trip when we lose a day. Yesterday was Thursday and today is Saturday as we have crossed the dateline. A strong wind is blowing and the seas are choppy, but the ship rides well and no one appears to be sick. There is much conjecture as to how the Tasman is going to treat us. The day is spent much like all the others.

**Sunday 13th June.** The wind that blew from the west has abated somewhat today and although the ship is still dipping into the swell, it is not so marked as it was yesterday.

I have finished Williams’ book on Russia and was greatly impressed by it. It was written in a common sense factual and objective way and should make a great impression upon people desiring to learn the truth about Russia. I am now reading Eve Curie’s book *Journey among*
Warriors. The daughter of the famous French Curie family of uranium fame, she went to the various war fronts as a correspondent.

There is a joint birthday party as Mrs Valentine, who is in charge of the American Red Cross girls, had a birthday on the 11\textsuperscript{th} (the day we didn’t have), and Don Campbell had his on the 13\textsuperscript{th}. The events were celebrated together with the usual cocktail party preceding dinner. The more I see of these cocktail parties the more I am convinced of their complete futility, but I suppose they carry some elements of social importance and on a ship one cannot remain aloof and detached.

The dinner was served in Swedish buffet style and then two large and well-decorated cakes were cut up. There is no doubt about the skill of the chef who can turn out a meal for any occasion and circumstances.

During the last few days a number of pencil sketches of the passengers were drawn by one of the American girls and were hung on the walls of the smoke room. The chief officer then lit on the bright idea that these sketches should be auctioned and the proceeds handed to Lady Wales for the Sutherland Homes. The result was a great financial success, altogether netting $130 - so that we have now $200 in hand for the home. I had to bid $12 for my portrait and I think Sir George Wales brought $15 and Mr H.G. Sleigh even $16.

**Monday 14\textsuperscript{th} June.** We appear to be now well into the Tasman and the seas are choppier, the ship commencing to roll for the first time. However there is a following wind which should help us along.

I don’t think I have attempted any description yet of the ship, its crew or passengers. It is a fine seaworthy Swedish freighter [the *Parrakoola*], a little on the slow side; about 12-15 knots. Tonnage 9-10,000 tons. It is comfortable and the cabins are two-berth on the main deck, which gives plenty of air and light. As it is well laden it sails well, although we have been fortunate to so far escape any heavy weather. If we run into bad weather our speed will have to be substantially reduced because of valuable cargo carried on the deck consisting of bombing aeroplanes valued at £50,000 [$2.2 million] each.

The crew is mainly Swedish, particularly the officers, and most of them speak English fairly well. The skipper, Captain Reinhalt, is a quiet reserved strong type of man whose knowledge is wide and whose culture in music and literature is broad based. The Chief Officer is a sailor with much experience; a lively character and quite an opposite in type to the captain.
There are about 25 passengers on board. First a group of eight young American girls attached to the American Red Cross Welfare Auxiliary. I can’t quite gather the role they will play in Australia, but assume they are to help in the entertainment and welfare of the American troops. Many of them are teachers, but it is hard to see what special qualifications they have. None of them has any medical experience, so if any sickness had occurred on the boat we would have been forced to rely on the Chief Officer. He has a good medical chest and is supposed to be able to do first aid work. A serious medical problem would be difficult to handle on a boat which remains out of sight of land for three weeks, as these boats do on all their trips. The leader of the American girls is a Mrs Valentine who is a masterful, dynamic lady who knows her way about. The other American girls are in the twilight between flapperdom and womanhood.

There are four other women on board. There is Lady Wales, accompanied by her husband Sir George (ex Lord Mayor of Melbourne). Also Mrs Tinney, whose husband is an officer of the Commonwealth Government and who has been in London for some years. They have their two young children with them - Margaret, 12, and Ian, a two year old who has taken the ship by storm because of his goodness, brightness and friendliness. The ship’s captain says Ian is the best child that has ever travelled on any of his ships and I think we all agree with him. Then there is a Mrs Westerland, an Australian woman who married a Dutch East Indies airman about a year ago. She is now returning home and, strangely enough, she lives in Primrose Street, Essendon within a five-minute walk of our house. She is a very game woman, as she is not far from having a baby, so the trip has been one of great and continuing anxiety to her. I intend helping her to get priority travel to Melbourne when we reach Sydney. The other woman passenger is a Mrs Scholl who is employed by the Dutch East Indies Government. She is going to Melbourne and will be employed at the Dutch Government offices in Temple Court (near my chambers) - so that is coincidence number two.

There are nine male passengers. Mr Milligan is a Sydney electrical goods manufacturer. Mr Plowman is from Sydney and also in the electrical and radio business. Sir George Wales and H.G. Sleigh are Melbourne oilmen. Mr Wachelt [?] is a well-known aeronautical engineer, and a Mr Don Campbell is one of Lockheed’s technical advisers. Mr Campbell is an American citizen who married Reg Ansett’s divorced wife. He proposes bringing his wife and her two boys
back to America with him in July. Messrs Berry and Grainger are two Australian air mechanics who have been sent to England and America for information in relation to recent aeroplane construction.

Instead of giving the usual cocktail party, Sir George Wales and I provide wines for dinner, which everyone seems to enjoy. After dinner Miss Barker, the Red Cross girl who did the pencil sketches of the passengers, handed me the proceeds of the auction which amounted to $147 [A$1900], a truly amazing result. Altogether now I have no less than $237 for the Sutherland Homes, so Mrs Wenborn will get a welcome surprise when a cheque for £70 [$3000] odd reaches her.

**Tuesday 15th June.** Weather changes are a little surprising. There is very little wind and no heavy seas when we go to breakfast but soon afterwards we run into heavy rain. Later, however, the seas become moderate.

I spend two most interesting hours with the captain in his comfortable cabin. He has a fine library and an excellent collection of gramophone records. I perused again the meditations of Marcus Aurelius and glanced through the pages of the *Oxford Anthology of English Verse*. The captain’s favourite verses were marked in pencil and they indicated admirable judgement. His culture as a Swede is certainly most catholic. I then had a glance at an interesting recent biography on Dante. Altogether I could have easily have spent all the day in such a happy, pleasurable atmosphere.

I read and walked in the afternoon and played bridge at night. Eve Curie’s *Journey Among Warriors* is just as the American reviewers have described it. She is far too verbose and rather spoils an interesting work by writing so much that is quite trivial.

**Wednesday 16th June.** Weather is still behaving kindly to us and, although we are in seas that are noted for their turbulent moods, we are meeting them in a friendly way. As we are near the end of the trip I am becoming too restless to read with any deep interest. This day is a rather anxious one for those in charge of the ship, as the submarine menace is probably greatest and we are still some distance from land. The captain told me that we were ahead of schedule, but instead of slowing the ship down he would go down south a little, or even turn back for a couple of hours. This is because of the schedule of hours set for the entry into Sydney Harbour.

**Thursday 17th June.** A little after 8am we see an outline of the Australian coast and know we are not too far away. Everyone is
relieved and happy at the prospect of soon being in Australia after 21 days at sea. During that time we have sighted no land and only two boats - and those in the first two days of the journey. Very few on board worry much about breakfast, as we are all concerned about seeing the coastline come more prominently into view. I think we have come rather south of Sydney as we are moving northwards. The pilot comes out to us, while aircraft come to protect us in the last few miles of our long journey. And then we go through the heads and the protecting boom inside the harbour.

We anchor in the harbour whilst the doctor comes aboard, but our ship is clean and we are soon out of quarantine. Then the customs and immigration people board our ship, after which we lift anchor and slowly move up the harbour and under the bridge. It is 2.30 when we finally berth. I am glad to see Colonel Hodgson on the wharf, so know I will be looked after. He arranges for the customs to clear me first but I have to pay a rather high duty on the few things I am bringing in - no less than £13 [$570], but a war must be paid for.

Colonel Hodgson tells me that I am to go to Canberra to see the Prime Minister. It is a proper duty for me to discharge, although a profound disappointment not to be going home. I go off to the Australia [Hotel] and seem to spend the whole afternoon with pressmen and photographers. I am glad that I had the foresight to prepare my press statement on the ship and have a number of copies made so there is enough to go round.

Later in the afternoon Mrs Street calls to see me and then Mr Mikhalov, the USSR representative of Tass. He is sending a copy of my press statement to Moscow after I add a paragraph in relation to the second anniversary of Russia’s entry into the war.
The Post-War Years, 1943-1960.

Upon his return to Australia, Bill gradually regained his health and resumed his political career and the activities he had been involved in before leaving for the USSR. He continued to express his admiration for the Russian people and the Soviet Regime but, when asked by his sister-in-law Isabel Morfoot what Russia was like, he said simply, “it wouldn’t do for us”. Bill had not mentioned in his diary how much homesickness had affected him while away, but his letters to his wife give some indication:

*I can’t overcome a persistent homesickness - darling, you and the children are my world. It is perhaps a selfish view having regard to the World tragedy that engulfs us all today, but there it is.*

*[Even] with all the varied interests of this post, not a day has passed but that I have longed to be home. I very much fear I am neither a diplomat nor a wanderer.*

*I can’t wait to come home to you my beloved one. Oh how I just live for that moment. I believe deep down in my heart that our being apart has, more than anything else, accounted for all my nervous trouble and I never want to leave you as long as I live…*

This final passionate remark made Mary smile, as she received it some weeks after Bill’s return, and he had already left again to travel interstate on political business!

Meanwhile back in Kuibyshev, Keith Officer had become Chargé d’Affaires (acting in place of the Minister) with Peter Heydon Counsellor. Ironically, after the inactivity that had led to Bill’s breakdown, within a month there was a mass of work, as Australia took over the work of the Polish Embassy after Russia severed ties with the Polish government-in-exile. This happened after the Poles had asked the Red Cross to investigate the death of 8000 of their officers whose bodies had been found in a mass grave, with the Soviets suspected of committing the massacre. As the Germans had found the bodies, the Soviets accused Poland of collaborating with the Nazis and expelled their diplomats.

In addition to the Polish Embassy work, the Australian Legation also had to make a move to Moscow in August 1943 - just as Bill had hoped.
Keith Officer continued in charge until J.J. Maloney, a NSW Labor MP, was appointed the new Australian Minister to Russia in December 1943. Bill Duncan had returned to Russia after spending some time in Washington recovering from bronchial Pneumonia. He remained in Moscow until 1945. Max Crawford was forced to return to Australia in 1944 due to bad health. After the war, Peter Heydon and Keith Officer continued with their diplomatic careers, both being knighted for their services to diplomacy.

In the years 1944 and 1945, the Allies gradually overpowered the Germans. The second front that had long been requested by Stalin finally was created when, in July 1944, the British and Americans landed at Normandy in France. Victory was finally achieved in Europe in May 1945 and three months later over Japan. The cost to the world had been terrible, with over 20 million people killed. An additional cost was the loss of much of Eastern Europe to the domination of the USSR, creating an “iron curtain” from East Germany to Albania that would last for 45 years.

In Australian Labour politics the post-war period was one of turmoil, with factions causing serious rifts within the party. In the Cain government of 1945, Bill was once more appointed Attorney General as well as Chief Secretary. His most significant legislation during this period involved setting up a Trotting Control Board to regulate the Harness racing industry in which bribery and corruption were rife. This, however, made him an enemy of the notorious John Wren, who financed a massive campaign against Bill in Dundas. This campaign, along with the Federal Labor Government’s Bank Nationalisation Legislation, led to Bill losing Dundas in the 1947 election, having held it continuously for 30 years. Bill would make a comeback in 1949, winning the Upper House Province of Doutta Galla and serving again as Attorney General in Cain’s ministry of 1952-55.

In 1956, Bill made a return journey to Europe. Travelling with his wife Mary and brother-in-law General Sir James Steele, he attended memorial services to mark the 40th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme and then visited some of the places where he had served. He wrote in his diary of that time:

\[I\text{ got a thrill as we got to the places that I had known - Steenwerck and the Bailleul where I walked round the square where we so frequently walked in 1917. Then we moved on to Neuve Eglise - where I was wounded - and the ridges of}\]

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Messines. These ridges were so calm and peaceful now that I could never believe they were so scarred when I last saw them. We pass over Messines ridge and soon we reach Ploegsteert Wood. The Wood was green and graceful and has completely recovered from the battering of 1917. Armentières is still a bit shabby but has grown somewhat since our days. We pass both Tissage and Houplines, but I am unable to identify anything of the past, not even the school which was our Main Dressing Station.

Bill also visited the grave of his brother-in-law and legal partner, Hugh Gordon. Hugh was a pilot with the Pathfinders, a unit that flew aircraft to guide bombers to their targets over Germany during World War 2. He was on his thirtieth and final mission when his plane was shot down over Holland. In a tragic coincidence, the news reached Bill on the day he arrived safely back in Australia from Russia. Bill wrote of Hugh’s grave at the Jonkerbos War Cemetery near Nijmegen:

The cemetery is about four miles out of the city in quiet low wooded country and is in beautiful order with lawns neatly cut and the graves all covered with flowers. A great lump rose in my throat as I stood in front of Hugh’s grave and read the inscription:

Flying Officer H.L. Gordon, RAAF
15th June 1943. Age 34
Till the day breaks and the shadows flee away.
I sadly placed the wreath of poppies and laurel leaves and came away and wondered what he would have been today in the full bloom of manhood, had he but been spared the supreme sacrifice he had to make.

Bill Slater died on June 19th 1960, after a short battle with cancer. He was still a Member of Parliament when he died, having been an MP for 41 of his 70 years. A state funeral was held and thousands of people lined the route to Springvale Crematorium. Tributes were paid to him from all political parties and many sections of the community. Oswald Barnett, of the Methodist Church, wrote that “he was one of the few who entered politics with a pure heart and, despite all its delusions and temptations, he remained pure and untainted to the end”.

In the Victorian Parliament, Labor MP Clive Stoneham said that Bill Slater’s special mission in life was to “elevate the underdog...he was
intolerant of injustice, and was at all times a dauntless defender of civil liberties”. From the other side of the House, Henry Bolte said he always found him to be a “clean straight shooter” and the leader of the Country Party, Sir Albert Lind, said “I held Bill Slater in the highest possible regard, not only politically but also personally. No one knows better than I what he did for all types of people in this state and the assistance he gave to persons who could not afford to pay for legal advice. As a result he won his way into the heart of all who knew him”.

Jack Galbally, a Labor MLC, described him as “a man of intense loyalty and integrity. As a lawyer he established a large practice and won the respect and admiration of the whole profession”. He concluded in his address to the House: “He was the gentlest of men, the fierce side of his nature was apparent only when striking at bigotry, prejudice and injustice. Long, I hope, will we treasure his memory”.

Finally, in the words of the Reverend Victor James of the Unitarian Church:

"It can be truly said, his life will be his most lasting memorial."
Appendix 1

This was a favourite poem of Bill Slater, which he refers to on February 6, 1917.

Home Thoughts from Laventie

By E. Wyndham Tennant (1897 - 1916)

Green gardens in Laventie!
Soldiers only know the street
Where the mud is churned and splashed about
   By battle-wending feet;
And yet beside one stricken house there is a glimpse of grass -
   Look for it when you pass.

Beyond the church whose pitted spire
Seems balanced on a strand
Of swaying stone and tottering brick,
   Two roofless ruins stand;
And here, among the wreckage, where the back-wall should have been,
   We found a garden green.

The grass was never trodden on,
The little path of gravel
Was overgrown with celandine;
   No other folk did travel
Along its weedy surface but the nimble-footed mouse,
   Running from house to house.

So all along the tender blades
Of soft and vivid grass
We lay, nor heard the limber wheels
   That pass and ever pass
In noisy continuity until their stony rattle
   Seems in itself a battle.
At length we rose up from this ease
Of tranquil happy mind,
And searched the garden's little length
   Some new pleasaunce to find;
And there some yellow daffodils, and jasmine
   hanging high,
   Did rest the tired eye.

The fairest and most fragrant
Of the many sweets we found
Was a little bush of Daphne flower
   Upon a mossy mound,
And so thick were the blossoms set and so divine
the scent,
   That we were well content.

Hungry for Spring I bent my head,
The perfume fanned my face,
And all my soul was dancing
   In that lovely little place,
Dancing with a measured step from wrecked and
shattered towns
   Away . . . upon the Downs.

I saw green banks of daffodil,
Slim poplars in the breeze,
Great tan-brown hares in gusty March
   A-courting on the leas.
And meadows, with their glittering streams - and
silver-scurrying dace -
   Home, what a perfect place!

Notes: Limber is a gun carriage
       Pleasaunce is a secret garden
       Dace is a small fish.
Appendix 2: Chronology

The following list indicates where William Slater stayed over extended periods. For cities he passed through, see the Index.

Australia  Aug 29- Nov 3, 1942; June 17, 1943  
Cairo    Dec 13-15, 1942; Apr 18-19, 1943  
Canada  Nov 24-28, 1942; May 7-12 1943  
England  Aug 9, 1917 - Feb 16, 1918  
France  Jan 1- Aug 8, 1917  
Kuibyshev  Jan 2-7, Jan 17 - Feb 9, Feb 20 - Apr 4, Apr 15, 1943  
Melbourne  Aug 29- October 12, Oct 14- Nov 1, 1942  
Moscow  Jan 9-15, Feb 12-17, Apr 6-15, 1943  
New York  Nov 13-14, Nov 28-30, 1942; May 3-7 1943  
Sydney  Nov 1 - 3, 1942; June 17, 1943  
Teheran  Dec 21-31, 1942, Apr 16-18, 1943  
USA  Nov 7-24, Nov 28- Dec 6, 1942; Apr 23-May 7, May 12-26, 1943  
USSR  Jan 1 - Apr 15, 1943  
Washington  Nov 14-24, Nov 30-Dec 2, 1942; Apr 23, May 3-7, 1943

Appendix 3: Further Reading

The following books and articles give further details about William Slater.


Index

Numbers in *italics* refer to photographs.
Details about entries list country of origin, political affiliation, occupation etc.
Positions given generally refer to the period 1942-43.
A person’s relationship to Bill Slater is given in brackets, eg (sister).

Abbreviations used in the index:

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>10thFA - 10th Field Ambulance</td>
<td>Leg. - Legation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19thC - Nineteenth Century</td>
<td>Lib. - Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38thB - 38th Battalion</td>
<td>ME - Middle East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADS - Advanced Dressing Station</td>
<td>MHR - Member of the House of Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFL - American Federation of Labour</td>
<td>Min. - Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIF - Australian Imperial Force</td>
<td>MLA - Member of the Legislative Assembly (Victoria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALP - Australian Labor Party</td>
<td>MLC - Member of the Legislative Council (Victoria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amb. - Ambassador</td>
<td>Newsp - newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANA - Australian Natives Association</td>
<td>NSW - New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship League</td>
<td>PM - Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Att.- Attaché</td>
<td>Prem - Premier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aus. - Australia</td>
<td>Pres - President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-in-law - Brother (etc)-in-law</td>
<td>PS - Public Servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brit. - Britain</td>
<td>Rep. - Republican Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can. - Canada</td>
<td>rep. - representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Com. - Commission</td>
<td>RSA - Returned Soldiers’ Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Con. - Conservative</td>
<td>S. Af. - South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP - Country Party</td>
<td>S. Am. - South America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cr - Councillor</td>
<td>Sec. - Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dem. - Democratic Party</td>
<td>Sen. - Senator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dip. - Diplomat</td>
<td>Soc. - Socialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emb. - Embassy</td>
<td>Sol. - Solicitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eng. - English</td>
<td>TU - Trade Unionist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ent. - Entertainer</td>
<td>USSR - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Aff. - Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Vic - Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. - General</td>
<td>VP - Vice President</td>
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<tr>
<td>GG - Governor General</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>GOC - General Officer Command</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is. - Island</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Just. - Justice (Judge)</td>
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<td>Lab. - Labor Party</td>
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