



*Sir Paul Meernaa Caedwalla Hasluck (1905 – 1993),  
KG, GCMG, CVO, 17<sup>th</sup> Governor-General of Australia.  
Source: Royal Western Australian Historical Society.*

## SIR PAUL HASLUCK The Opportunities of his Career

Geoffrey Bolton

When I speak of the opportunities of Sir Paul Hasluck's career, I don't mean only the opportunities that led him from Perth Modern School to the status of Governor-General and Knight of the Garter, with many achievements in between, impressive though that record is. He himself was always ready to recognise the role that chance and opportunity played during his life, and modestly entitled the beguiling autobiography of his early years *Mucking About*, though his wife always insisted that this title disguised a sufficiency of ambition. For me as a biographer the opportunities lie in the varied aspects of Australian history, and specifically of Western Australian history, opened up in an exploration of Paul Hasluck's life. I shall sketch some of these during this essay, but must begin with a caution. Before and after his entry into public life Hasluck was an excellent historian, with more than the average historian's conscientiousness about his responsibility to the craft. He carefully preserved and organised his archives, ranging from the oral histories which he collected for this Society in the late 1920s and early 1930s and his correspondence with his future wife during the same period to the often quite biting pen-portraits which he drew of his fellow-politicians in Canberra in later life, and the substantial books written in his retirement in which he reflected on his public career. Because he was so historically conscious, to a degree unusual in public figures, it is tempting to see the people whom he met and the events in which he participated through his own eyes, and the biographer must be constantly aware of this. At the same time, it is probably helpful for the biographer to know Western Australia and to know the environment that shaped Paul and Alexandra Hasluck.

Paul Hasluck was born at Fremantle on 1 April 1905, the second son of Salvation Army officers. Although not well off, the family had very respectable English social and intellectual connections and encouraged the aspirations of the cleverest of their children. When Captain Hasluck was sent to attend an international congress of the Salvation Army in London in 1914 and could take with him only one member of the family, the parents chose the nine-year-old Paul. He won a scholarship to Perth Modern School, that dedicated ladder of opportunity for bright young Western Australians, and was there from 1918 to 1922, one year ahead of H C 'Nugget' Coombs, whose career in the Commonwealth public service was to intertwine with Hasluck's until both came to symbolise two opposite poles in aboriginal policy. Hasluck became a

journalist on the leading Perth daily, *The West Australian*, and worked for them the end of 1922 until 1940.

This is the period of his life described in the most beguiling of his autobiographical writings, *Mucking About*. But there is more to tell. In the archives held by his family there is correspondence with Walter James (son of the premier of the same name, and himself to become Australia's first noted writer on food and wine), and there are the letters exchanged by the young Paul with Alexandra Darker, who shared his interest in history and was to become his wife and in time a significant historian in her own right. He wrote poetry, and made a name as the drama critic for *The West Australian*. Together with the music critic 'Fidelio' Kornweibel, he set high standards of professionalism. They were not inhumanly high standards. One evening, invited to attend a private premiere of one of Henrietta Drake-Brockman's plays at the home of the artist Elizabeth Blair Barber (Mrs Charles Bunning), he is reported to have spent most of the performance outside on the verandah drinking whisky with Charles Bunning, but still contrived to file a convincing report. With his wife he launched the Freshwater Bay Press, dedicated to the publication of the work of local writers in a well-designed format; but the coming of the Second World War cut short that enterprise. But the main intellectual interest of his life lay in history.

At the age of 21 he was caught up in the formation of the [Royal] Western Australian Historical Society, becoming its assistant secretary with the specific task of interviewing elderly pioneers who might have stories to tell of the colonial past. Some had memories going back to within a few years of Captain Stirling's arrival. Using his Pitman's shorthand, he assembled a collection of uniquely valuable oral histories which were lodged with the State Record Office in 1993, and which may furnish material for another paper for this Society. His interest in history led him to undertake a part-time degree at the University of Western Australia, where he was taught by Professor Fred Alexander. Soon he wanted to write history. After the publication of Dr James Sykes Battye's magisterial *History of Western Australia* in 1924 there seemed to be only one substantial topic for a historian working in Perth to tackle, and that was the biography of the local hero, John Forrest, who had died in 1918. Hasluck collected material for this project, and wrote the first chapter, which was published many years later. But in 1934 as a reporter he accompanied an experienced magistrate, Henry Doyle Moseley, who had been appointed as royal commissioner to inquire into and report upon aboriginal policy in Western Australia, and this experience shaped his career.

It is worth noting here that Hasluck's first sustained encounter with Aborigines took place during his youth. His parents had charge of a boys' home at Collie. Its workforce included 'Black Paddy', a Nyongar who sometimes acted as a blacktracker, had become a Christian, and who was remembered many years later, in the condescending language of that era, as being 'as good as a white man.' In those years the young Hasluck may have formed the belief, not then widely shared, that Aborigines could be as good as white people. The boys' home might also have led him to believe that neglected children could sometimes best be served by institutionalised care. As an adult his experiences with the Moseley commission reinforced his opinion that the existing policies of segregation were not good enough, and he became one of a handful of Perth citizens active in the movement for aboriginal advancement. He could never have guessed how harshly some future critics would judge his attempts at aboriginal improvement.

When the time came for him to embark on postgraduate work he chose as his topic the relations between colonists and Aborigines in 19<sup>th</sup> century Western Australia, and this formed the basis of his first major book, *Black Australians*. It was the first study of its kind anywhere in Australia and showed how Aborigines had been marginalised until their status resembled, in Hasluck's words, that of a 'born idiot.' Unfortunately it was published in 1942 at a time when the attention of Australians was concentrated on the Pacific War, and this diminished its impact for the time being.

Hasluck's university studies fed an interest in international relations already stimulated by his work on the foreign affairs desk of *The West Australian*. Professor Alexander's strong suit was modern European history, and in the twenty years between the Treaty of Versailles and the outbreak of the Second World War, this meant a strong dose of diplomatic history. With the catastrophe of the First World War still vivid, attention was paid to the peacemaking processes at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and at Versailles in 1919. Both episodes strongly reinforced the concept of the balance of power as a cardinal principle in diplomacy. In the years following Waterloo Britain's foreign secretaries, Castlereagh and Canning, had deliberately thrown in their lot with France to create a countervailing power in Europe against the monarchies of Russia, Prussia and Austria. In the years following Versailles it was easy to blame the outbreak of the First World War on too slavish an adherence to the balance of power factor. Faith was placed in the League of Nations. Alexander himself had been a member of the Australian delegation in 1932, and Hasluck attended some of the sittings. By then the rise of the dictators was showing that Western

democracies had been insufficiently attentive to the balance of power. Hasluck's reading and observation led him to a realist view of international relations. Co-operation between nations should be encouraged, with the overriding objective of avoiding war, but it was unwise to overlook for one moment the ever-present force of national self-interest.

The reading, which Hasluck absorbed under Alexander's tuition and beyond, stood him in good stead when, at the beginning of 1941, through the combined influence of John Curtin and Professor Alexander, he was recruited into the fledgling Department of External Affairs. Accompanied by his wife and infant son he came to wartime Canberra, and is still remembered in local folklore for overcoming the inconveniences of petrol rationing by riding to work on a horse. On Saturdays the same horse sometimes did duty between the shafts of a sulky bringing the weekend's supply of beer from Queanbeyan to a 'dry' Canberra. The Haslucks' first impressions of wartime Canberra were not kind. He wrote to Henrietta Drake-Brockman:

There are no Australians in this hole – no one who is proudly and vehemently Australian and keenly aware of Australia and interested in every part of it. The people here are clever enough at their jobs, I suppose, but as a people they are denatured. This place annoys me. The best that can be said for it is that it is a completely sterile and safe cage in which public servants can work clearly without any major excitements to disturb their routine. One misses the intellectual movement that there was in Perth ... Alix and I sometimes get relief by going over to Queanbeyan, seven miles away. It is just an Australian country town but it is real and vulgar and vital and has some sound reason for its existence ...

You chaffed me about the public servants. Take away the specialists and professional men (say five per cent of the whole) and the public servant is really worse than any one could have imagined him to be. Loveable and engaging and even capable in some instances, but so very small and tidy and wrapped up in regulations. In a newspaper office the only questioning arises when it is being decided whether a certain objective is really wanted. That point settled, we go ahead and get it. In the service they never seem to make up their minds what they want, and that state of affairs causes them scarcely any worry. I am sure that if a public servant got into heaven by the wrong ladder he would nurse a grievance against the archangels instead of joining them in tennis matches or poker schools or whatever it is that archangels do up above on sunny days.

Except for the first nine months of his time at the Department of External Affairs Hasluck worked under Dr H V Evatt as minister until his resignation at the end of March 1947. This covered the period of the

Australia-New Zealand treaty of 1944, the San Francisco conference in 1945 which led to the formation of the United Nations, and the first fifteen months of its establishment at New York. Hasluck's account of this period, *Diplomatic Witness*, is full and accurate, and I shall draw from it only his comments on that other intellectual in politics, Evatt. At the most obvious level Hasluck found difficulty with Evatt's working habits: his untidiness, his lack of system in record-keeping, his playing of favourites, his habit of concentrating obsessively on one issue at a time. There is one file in the National Archives of haphazardly miscellaneous material which has been entitled: 'Dr Evatt's method of filing'. Hasluck's reaction against this may be observed in his own later style as a minister. All the same, he recognised and respected the quickness and energy of Evatt's intellect, and could not refrain from admiring the pertinacity with which he fought the cause of the smaller nations at the San Francisco conference.

Evatt and Hasluck differed in their concepts of international relations. In Hasluck's perception, Evatt had shown very little interest in foreign policy before his appointment to the ministry in October 1941, and he approached the creation of the United Nations from the standpoint of a constitutional lawyer. Evatt wished to see 'a new province for law and order' where under a system of one-nation-one-vote the smaller powers would be able to restrain the great. He seemed in Hasluck's view to take it for granted that the smaller powers would show less selfishness in their policies, or rather that their self-interest would make them want to elude the domination of either the United States and Britain on the one side or the Soviet Union on the other. Evatt saw Australia as actively leading the shaping of a third force acting as a curb on the two blocs emerging as the war ended. Hasluck could not share this vision. Although far from uncritical of either Britain or the United States, he considered that the realities of power politics prevented Australia from drifting too far from their orbit.

Hasluck's decision to quit the Department of External Affairs in 1947 no doubt reflected some of these ideological differences, but there were a number of personal factors. One may simply have been fatigue, and another, a sense of lack of appreciation. He had been working prodigiously hard at a high level at the United Nations, but his status was only that of a counsellor, and when he left the Department described him as a 'temporary clerk'. He and his wife wanted to bring up their two young sons in Australia, and when the Secretary-General offered him the post of United Nations representative in London with responsibility for most of Europe, he turned down the offer. For a biographer, there is also surely some relevance in the fact that, while at

the Department, he had formed friendships with first John Burton, and then Ian Milner, only for a rift to arise in each case. He came to see Burton as too much Evatt's pet, and when at the age of thirty Burton was appointed secretary to the Department, leapfrogging seniors such as Hasluck and Alan Watt, it was the trigger for his resignation. Further to the left than Burton, Milner defected to the Soviet bloc. Disenchantment with these friendships may well have fostered disenchantment with the left wing in Hasluck, though he never entirely lost his small-'l' liberalism. This sometimes caused disagreement with his wife Alexandra, who was a more outspoken upholder of conservative positions.

On his return to Australia it might have been expected that, like Macmahon Ball, Hasluck would find his future at a university. He was commissioned to write the two volumes on the home front in the official history of Australia in the Second World War, and at the beginning of 1948 took up a readership in Professor Alexander's department at the University of Western Australia. A few months later he took part in a conference at the Australian National University on the future of archival policy in Australia. In his first years at External Affairs Hasluck had been the departmental representative when, at almost the darkest moment of the Pacific War in mid-1942, with remarkable faith for the future John Curtin had convened a meeting chaired by Dr Charles Bean to make arrangements for the preservation of wartime archives. Drawing on this experience Hasluck wrote a seminal paper providing the basis for much of the planning on which the present Australian National Archives were founded. He completed the first volume of the official history in the impressively short space of two and a half years. His editor, Gavin Long, thought it the finest work of Australian history yet produced.

It might have seemed that Hasluck was soon destined for a chair in history and/or politics, although it would have been outside Western Australia. Instead, he was tempted into standing as the Liberal candidate for the newly formed House of Representatives seat of Curtin at the federal elections of December 1949. At this election the second Menzies government was swept into its long tenure of power. Hasluck was returned for what became an increasingly safe Liberal seat, and the shape of his career was settled. He made a good impression. At the first cabinet reshuffle, in May 1951, Menzies appointed him Minister for Territories, where he was to remain for twelve and a half years.

His background as a historian with an interest in archives would influence his performance as a cabinet minister. As a minister Hasluck

noted that: 'The purpose of keeping archives is to meet the needs of administration. The use of archives for historical research is incidental to that main purpose.' This suggested that their interest to posterity and the historian was at all times a secondary consideration. I doubt if he practised what he preached. Within a few months of attaining ministerial office he was already perfecting the art of the crisp and telling minute annotated at the end of a file, sometimes to praise, more often to exhort and upbraid. I quote two examples among many: 'This memorandum is just a page of excuses to cover twelve months of duck-shoving' or, on a stocktaking report from Government House, Nauru: 'This is admirable. I know of no other institution that has come under my notice in the past ten years where the wastage has been as small as one cake fork a year. Most of them seem to lose three or four refrigerators and a truckload of furniture.' I find it impossible to imagine that Hasluck, with his historian's training and his intimate knowledge of the value of archives as source material, could ever completely expel from his mind the image of a future historian looking over his shoulder as he wrote. This makes him unusually hard to evaluate, as his comments, whether spontaneous or well considered, could be seen as designed both for the moment and for the eye of posterity.

I speculate that Hasluck resolved this problem in his own mind by striving for consistent standards of bureaucratic impersonality, so that he expected his minutes to be read as a record of administrative process rather than as fodder for a biographer. I'll have more to say about his style of administrative process a little later, but he was reacting against Evatt's muddled and personalised approach, and expected public business to be conducted through well-defined hierarchies with well-defined boundaries. He was too good a wordsmith to eradicate the personal touch completely from his memoranda and minutes, but he wanted those documents to express the ideas of the person who happened to be minister, and not those of Paul Hasluck the individual with ambitions and prejudices. All the same, as a historian he was not unmindful of his debt to posterity, and as he continued in ministerial office he began increasingly to make another form of payment.

Among his intellectual baggage Hasluck included a lifelong love of French literature, especially French literature of the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. There is a story related of him that on one occasion during a ministerial tour of Papua-New Guinea his party arrived at an airstrip where they found a woman and child in need of urgent medical treatment. There was insufficient room on the aircraft to accommodate them, so Hasluck proposed that he should stay behind while the woman



and child were flown to hospital. When the aircraft returned it was to find the Minister placidly sitting in the jungle clearing reading a drama by Racine. Hasluck also knew the writings of the Duc de Saint-Simon, who never quite achieved his ambitious at the court of Louis XIV, and who contented himself by writing memoirs containing acute and acerbic pen-portraits of his fellow-courtiers. At some time in the 1950s Hasluck began the habit of writing candid pen-portraits of his cabinet colleagues, usually of not more than a page or two in length. As the years went on he sometimes updated them in the light of evolving events, and extend his range to include prominent public figures in the Opposition and elsewhere. Nor did he confine himself to pen-portraits. A proficient if untrained artist, he sometimes amused himself during cabinet meetings by sketching one or other of his colleagues. Even before he knew how his own career would end, he was training himself to become the Saint-Simon of 20<sup>th</sup> century Australian politics.

When Hasluck became Minister for Territories in 1951 his responsibilities included the newly united territory of Papua-New Guinea, the Northern Territory, Norfolk Island and Nauru. From his university studies he had gained knowledge of British experiments in the creation of legislatures in Asian and African colonies, and he was well aware of the problems involved in securing an appropriate balance of ethnic representation, as well as the tendency for indigenous politics to fall into the hands of a comparative minority of the urban and the well-educated. There was also the issue of timing: how long could it be expected to take before the white colonists gradually yielded power to an indigenous majority, and what would happen in those colonies where a significant number of colonists had been allowed to acquire land and settle permanently? British history books taught that the Romans in Britain had taken more than three hundred years to advance the aboriginal inhabitants of what is now England from savages, who painted themselves with blue woad and burned their enemies in wicker cages, to presentable facsimiles of Roman citizens. It was hard to grasp that Africans and Pacific Islanders might not require so long an apprenticeship. But Hasluck also had the advantage of his time at the United Nations when issues of colonialism and the concept of trusteeship had been well to the fore, and this experience was also to shape his thinking.

Hasluck began by consulting widely. His old schoolmate ‘Nugget’ Coombs -- now permanent head of the Commonwealth Treasury and speaking with the authority of a major architect of postwar reconstruction policies -- told him that it would not be necessary to maintain a separate administration at Port Moresby as air travel had

improved to the point where Papua-New Guinea could be run conveniently from Canberra. Hasluck replied, 'Even although public affairs might be run more efficiently, residents in Darwin or Moresby would certainly have a different feeling to an administration centred on Canberra than ... centred on their own town.' And he added, 'The difficulty in which I find myself in approaching this task is that we have to keep the old machine running at the same time as we are trying to plan changes, and a great number of the parts of the machine seem to be held together with rather odd looking pieces of metal.'

He asked that Britain might send out a senior officer from the Commonwealth Relations Office or the Colonial Office to advise on lines of development for Papua-New Guinea, but the British could not immediately send anybody, and he was soon ready to rely on Australian resources. In choosing his senior advisers he had some flexibility, as it was the first time that the Department of Territories had a Minister of its own. In earlier years it had formed part of a Department of Home and Territories, and in the first eighteen months of the Menzies government it shared its minister, Percy Spender, with the Department of External Affairs. Hasluck was not backward in discarding the inheritances from the past and staffing senior positions with his own men.

The three key positions under Hasluck were the Secretary of the Department of Territories, and the Administrators of the Northern Territory and Papua-New Guinea. As Hasluck put it to Coombs, 'The sort of administration which may be best is a triangle from Canberra, Moresby to Darwin with close and intimate relations and frequent consultations between the two Administrators and the Permanent Head of Department.' This did not mean that there would be no direct communication between Hasluck as Minister and the two Administrators, but it did imply that, unlike Evatt, the channels of communication would be consistent and formalised.

The man who expected to fill the Secretaryship was J R Halligan, whom Roger Thomson describes as 'Happy' Halligan, experienced and likeable but 'an unimaginative bureaucrat who showed no evidence of having read the growing body of literature on colonial administration'. He was moved to become Australia's representative on the South Pacific Commission, and Hasluck brought in C R Lambert, Commonwealth Director of Regional Development, with a background in rural reconstruction in New South Wales. Hasluck believed Lambert to possess qualities which he himself lacked, and valued his professionalism, although he later wrote that he was never sure that Lambert really understood his long-term goals. It was well that such a

demanding minister as Hasluck was served by such an imperturbable old hand.

A R Driver, the Administrator of the Northern Territory since 1946, had indicated his wish to retire. Hasluck did nothing to discourage him, as he thought Driver slow in tackling the Territory's problems – though this may have been as much due to shortages of labour and materials as any fault of Driver's, who was distracted by personal problems. In his place, Hasluck attracted Frank Wise, a Labor ex-premier of Western Australia and still Leader of the Opposition, who combined proven experience of administrative and legislative management with a professional background in tropical agricultural science. The Administrator of Papua-New Guinea, J K Murray, was also a respected agricultural scientist, and although he was thought to have sympathies with the Labor government who appointed him, Hasluck was at first disposed to keep him. However, he confirmed Spender's decision to appoint an assistant administrator.

This post went to Donald Cleland. Cleland was suspect to some because he had been general secretary of the Liberal Party and was alleged to owe his position to political favour. In fact he was chosen without ministerial interference over more than a hundred competitors by a selection committee made up of senior public servants, and had been in charge of ANGAU, the provisional authority administering Papua-New Guinea during the later stages of the war. In that capacity he had in fact been Murray's superior. After twelve months, Hasluck decided to remove Murray, whom he considered as too old for the job and too slow to implement policy. He was also critical of a reluctance in Murray to communicate freely or to bring forward issues needing Canberra's attention. Cleland replaced him and remained at Port Moresby until 1966.

Foremost among his long-term goals for the Territory of Papua-New Guinea, Hasluck put the forging of a sense of unity among its diverse peoples: some might call it a form of assimilation. At the beginning of his term of office he wrote:

The basic problem of all our work in New Guinea from this time onwards is a problem of race relations. It is a problem of finding a way in which two peoples at different but slowly converging standards of living and cultural habit can live in harmony with each other and with respect for each other's rights and each other's dignity and self-respect.

Twelve years later he still believed there was a long way to go, but his focus was entirely on the indigenous population. 'They are not yet a people with a common language, a common religion, a common history or a common ambition,' he wrote, 'Instead, there are ancient enmities and many barriers between them.' But the pressures from the United Nations and elsewhere for accelerated progress towards self-government were already mounting. Hasluck's last years in office involved a constant balancing act of fostering self-government at a pace fast enough to appease the critics but deliberate enough to consolidate political growth. In the process started by Hasluck, Australia must have got something right: after thirty years of independence Papua-New Guinea, although economically and socially troubled, remains one of the few formerly colonial nations with a functional parliamentary system, a convincing Government and a convincing Opposition. Admittedly, its parties and factions remind one more of 18<sup>th</sup> century England than Australia's tightly disciplined and docile caucuses of the present day.

Short-term goals included the extension of effective government throughout the Territory, the provision of health and welfare, the encouragement of commercial agriculture among the indigenous people and a curb on the alienation of land to European investors, and the introduction of widespread primary and subsequently secondary education. This required the building up of an efficient and dedicated public service, which would work in close empathy with the indigenous population. Several times Hasluck remarked that 'we are not fully informed of what is happening among the indigenous population,' and in 1958 commented to Cleland: 'You may remember that when we last toured the Highlands together, I remarked that one consequence of improved transport was that in many areas the distance between the European officer and the native inhabitant had increased, the European being the person who rode in the vehicle and the native being the person who walked, whereas at an earlier period they were all on foot together.'

Hasluck often fretted about the effect of media misrepresentation or gossip on public perceptions in Papua-New Guinea. His most frequent complaint lamented the slowness of progress in a tropical environment, and he tended to vent his impatience on Cleland. On one occasion when Cleland incautiously mentioned that Hasluck had expressed dissatisfaction and asked for details, Hasluck replied with a letter including a tremendous paragraph consisting of a single sentence, half a page in length and absolutely grammatical, listing sixteen separate shortcomings, and concluding: 'I appreciate that there are many difficulties in the way and that you suffer from many handicaps in the non-availability of material both human and inanimate. My criticisms

are always made against a standard of perfection.’ The partnership endured nevertheless, and when Hasluck finally left Territories after twelve and a half years, Cleland wrote him a letter of appreciation in terms of more than conventional warmth: ‘I probably know, more than others, just how much you have given to the territories in all aspects of your work, and what has taken place in the last 12 years must stand to your everlasting credit.’

My impression is that Hasluck rode the successive administrators of the Northern Territory less hard, perhaps because they seemed more obviously to be producing the desired results. Wise was succeeded in 1956 by a career civil servant, J C Archer, known as ‘Cautious Clarrie’. In 1961 Roger Nott, a Labor cabinet minister in New South Wales, accepted the position. Cynics speculated that he had been offered the job in order to give the Country Party a chance of winning his rural seat at a by-election – though this did not happen – and Darwin recalls him as the least effective of the three. ‘Wise was wise,’ went a Territory proverb, ‘and Nott was not.’

Under Frank Wise the reconstruction of Darwin went ahead, and Hasluck urged a high priority for urban planning. When the discovery of uranium at Rum Jungle called for the creation of the town of Batchelor, he wrote

I particularly want to ensure that the town, however large or however small, should be planned and developed in a way which will set a high standard for the Territory. Here is a chance for us to tackle the social problem of living in the tropics because at last we have what looks like a solid economic foundation as well as a national interest in building good homes and providing good facilities.

Seven years later he wrote to Archer approving a town plan for Darwin and commenting: ‘It is hard to see where anyone has planted a tree on public property in the past five years...We ought to try to make this the most beautiful tropical town in Australia.’ He was no less concerned for the preservation of heritage sites, such as the Old Telegraph Station at Alice Springs and the creation of reserves at sites such as Ayers Rock (Uluru).

Hasluck’s aboriginal policies were regarded at the time as the most enlightened in Australia, setting an example for more laggard State governments. A few months after becoming Minister, he wrote to R S Leydin, Assistant Administrator for the Northern Territory.

Assimilation is the objective of native welfare measures. This means that the aborigines and persons of mixed blood are expected eventually to attain to the same manner of living and to the same privileges of citizenship as white Australians and to live, if they choose to do so, as members of a single Australian community, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians.

Note the operative phrase: 'if they choose to do so.' It is not usually an option open to victims of genocide. In the same letter Hasluck made it plain to Leydin that under a policy of assimilation it was neither necessary nor desirable to take positive steps to break up traditional aboriginal communities; on the contrary, as he put it, '...the policy of assimilation is the result of an observation that the breaking up of the tribes is actually taking place and that the movement of the coloured people away from the desert and the bush towards settlement is taking place inevitably.'

It is fair to comment that Hasluck expected traditional society to decline through attrition. His attitude showed in 1959 when he described a situation in Alice Springs, 'when a tribal group starts to disintegrate and the young men are being attracted more and more to white ways.' The old men brought in their *churingas* from a remote hiding place and asked an official named McCoy to lock them in a safe: 'From time to time the old men may come to him and ask if they can see and handle them again. Then he unlocks them and they may either satisfy themselves that they still exist or croon over them a little. Then they go back to the dog-infested ashes of their camps to mourn in loneliness the loss of a culture.'

Not that Hasluck ignored attachment to country. In a minute of 1954 on educational policy in the Northern Territory he wrote:

The reason for trying to establish schools on pastoral properties is the belief that for at least one generation ahead natives whose family and tribal life is already definitely linked with a particular property are likely to find their most happy and useful future if they remain on the stations instead of being attracted away either to missions, Government settlements, or towns.

As Tim Rowse has pointed out, Hasluck's policies were predicated on the assumption that the pastoral industry would continue to provide employment for North Australian Aborigines, and might be buttressed by other primary industries. In planning a forest policy for the Northern Territory in 1955 he urged that

... a start might be made in declaring State forests in suitable parts of aboriginal reserves particularly in those parts where there is not sufficient employment for able-bodied natives. If such action were taken it would provide an immediate means of employment for mission natives ... It would also tend to build up over the years the basis of a future economic industry for the support of the higher social standards which such natives will attain in the next generation.

Hasluck could not have foreseen that, within little more than a decade, the equal wages award and increasing mechanisation would almost destroy the employment of aboriginal labour on the pastoral properties established on their country.

As in Papua-New Guinea, Hasluck's beliefs rested on the expectation that a nation was best served by a largely or entirely homogenous population. This was compatible with the prevailing view in the 1950s and 1960s that migrants would become wholly Australian within two generations. Such policies were explicable in an Australia aware of numerous examples of racial, ethnic and religious civil strife in the world. Hasluck and his contemporaries overlooked the possibility that a sense of aboriginal identity might not die out with the old men around their campfires' ashes. Aboriginal identity, modifying in a changing environment, adapting new concepts from other cultures, might survive tenaciously among Australians who for more than half a century had been excluded from participating in citizenship because the law defined them as Aborigines. Hasluck's own device of defining most Aborigines in the Northern Territory as 'wards', from which they could be exempted when their circumstances permitted, was meant to downplay the racial factor in aboriginal policy, but may in fact have perpetuated it.

Unfortunately, when critics began to draw attention to the potential defects in assimilation, Hasluck had invested so much intellectual and emotional energy into the cause that he could not listen. In December 1961 he wrote that more than any other group in Australia, it was the Communists who 'try to promote resistance to a policy of assimilation and try to maintain the racial identity of a separate aboriginal group. There are signs that their plausible arguments along those lines are having some effect among some soft-minded commentators who are certainly not communists themselves.' Hasluck was at risk of ossifying. More than a decade of constant hard work supervising every detail of his Department from the creation of high policy to the meticulous proofreading of departmental publications had left him without enough space to absorb new ideas or to recharge his intellectual batteries.

At last he moved from Territories to become at first Minister for Defence for four months and then, in April 1964 Minister for External Affairs. He was disappointed when he was not appointed to that portfolio in January 1960, when Casey retired and Menzies decided to take it on himself, and still more in December 1961 when, in response to Sir Garfield Barwick's importunities, Menzies gave him the job. It has been suggested that after experiencing Sir Earle Page as Health Minister, Menzies was unwilling to appoint ministers to what had been their field of expertise before entering politics. Perhaps Menzies sensed that there would be problems for Hasluck in working with senior diplomats such as Tange, Watt and Waller, who had been his equals as colleagues in the same department twenty years earlier. It is true that in 1965 Sir Arthur Tange, who in later life was critical of Hasluck, was removed from the permanent headship of the Department of External before Hasluck became Minister. Tange's successor, Sir James Plimsoll, was also a skilled and experienced diplomat, though his working methods were surprisingly unmethodical.

Hasluck brought with him the routines that had worked satisfactorily for him in Territories, but they did not serve him so well in External Affairs. Protected by a secretary of legendary efficiency, he preferred to conduct all business through his departmental head, in contrast to the more gregarious Barwick. This was feasible in Territories, and might have been feasible and desirable in External Affairs in Evatt's day, but the department was now too large and complex for this kind of regime. The Minister toiled incessantly to master the files in the same degree of detail as in Territories, and he packed as much as possible into demanding programmes of overseas travel, but he had no space to take on new ideas or to reflect deeply about the ideas already in his thinking. Also, he generated ill will in some of his staff by what was perceived as an unwillingness to seek all the advice available. Some have concluded that in concentrating on bureaucratic process he crippled his own and his department's capacity for imaginative policymaking.

At one of the darkest moments of the Cold War, in March 1951, Hasluck defined two principles for British and Australian diplomacy: to maintain our alliances, and to keep potential enemies apart. The first he thought was being achieved; the second was greatly complicated by the bridge between Europe and Asia represented by the ideology-driven Soviet Union. By 1964 he was prepared to acknowledge that the Soviet Union and the West had arrived at a viable balance of power, but peace was now threatened by the rise of Mao Zhedong's China. China he saw as implacable in seeking to expand its power across South-East Asia and perhaps beyond. He believed implicitly in the domino theory.



Intelligible in the generation who had seen the spread of Nazi Germany across Europe and the Japanese thrust south into the Pacific, this belief hardened into an inability for Hasluck to consider alternatives.

After his first journey to South-East Asia Hasluck decided that the Vietnam War had more potential to threaten Australia's interests than the confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia. True to his maxim of maintaining alliances he steered Australia into faithful compliance with United States policy, though this was sometimes hard to read. It must be admitted that he was too ready to accept that North Vietnam was a satellite of China, and failed to take on board the rueful advice of the French foreign minister, Couve de Murville, that the Vietnamese were habitually resistant to Chinese domination. On the other hand I am not convinced by Michael Sexton's argument which sees Hasluck as foremost among the Australian hawks pushing the United States into escalated conflict in Vietnam. It is noticeable that in the film *The Fog of War*, Robert McNamara asserts that America had no allies – as if Australia did not exist, or at least that if Australia was pressing for escalated conflict the United States Secretary of Defence never noticed. On the other hand in April 1965 when the Menzies government committed troops to Vietnam, Hasluck was among the minority of cabinet ministers urging caution.

Hasluck conducted Australia prudently in the crisis over the Indonesian confrontation with Malaysia, ending in the decline of Soekarno and the destruction of the Indonesian Communist Party. He took less part than Menzies in the negotiations leading to the Rhodesian unilateral declaration of independence in November 1965. Vietnam remained the central issue during his term as minister. There is no evidence that he ever expressed misgivings about Australia's role, but it is significant that although in retirement he wrote reflections on every other aspect of his public life, he never published anything about his years as Minister for External Affairs.

He was ambivalent about leading his party and leading a government. He records that the idea was first put to him in 1964 after Barwick went to the High Court, and some backbenchers doubted whether Holt would make an adequate leader after Menzies retired. He gave three reasons for refusing, in order of importance. First, he did not want the job; second, his wife was sure that he would do it badly; and third, it was no time to destabilise the Liberal Party. Ambition and a dislike of William McMahon nevertheless led him to contest the deputy leadership, unsuccessfully, when Harold Holt became Prime Minister in 1966. Hasluck's first reaction after Holt's death in 1967 was to suggest

that he should stand back while John Gorton competed for the leadership, and it is probable that it took the urging of Menzies to change his mind. Hasluck did nothing to lobby for support – maybe from a sense of propriety, maybe because of his own ambivalence, maybe because he knew that his wife was unhappy about the prospect of the Prime Minister's Lodge – and narrowly lost the ballot in the party room. He worked loyally enough with Gorton during his first year of office, and in later years asserted that he and three senior public servants were carrying much of the work of government. It does not seem that he was sorry to accept appointment as Governor-General, resigning from Parliament in February 1969 and taking office in April. He accepted the knighthood customary in the post, and was later to become the second Australian awarded the Order of the Garter, England's highest order of knighthood.

The consensus is that Hasluck filled the post well, and I would agree with it. He and his wife performed their ceremonial duties with dignity. He acted as confidant and mentor to Gorton and a few of his senior colleagues. On at least one occasion, when Gorton wanted to call out the Pacific Islands Regiment to quell a disturbance in Papua-New Guinea, Hasluck was an active force for restraint and conformity with constitutional propriety. He had no time for Gorton's successor, William McMahon. He had continual trouble with McMahon over the allocation of titles and awards, since the Prime Minister was given to promising such honours of the Crown in larger numbers than Australia was entitled to. There were particular problems when the Victorian Premier Henry Bolte decided he would like on his retirement to go to the House of Lords. McMahon pushed his case hard, as he was desperately afraid of alienating the Victorian Liberals, but Hasluck took the line that peerages were the mark of an older generation, such as Lord Casey. In any case no Australian could possibly be considered ahead of Sir Robert Menzies, and Menzies because of his incapacitating illness was not interested.

He defused another potential constitutional crisis when the outgoing Western Australian Governor, Sir Douglas Kendrew, wanted to encourage the Legislative Council to refuse supply to John Tonkin's State Labor government, so as to provoke a general election which would be won by the Leader of the Opposition, Sir Charles Court. It was not so much that Kendrew was hostile towards Tonkin, but he was very concerned about the impact of the Commonwealth Labor government led by Gough Whitlam, and thought that the States needed Court's leadership to confront Canberra. Apparently Kendrew thought none of the incumbent State premiers strong enough for the job, not

even Joh Bjelke-Petersen in Queensland. Hasluck convinced him that his proposal would stretch convention too far, and in the event, Court came to power at the next regular election in 1974.

When Gough Whitlam became Prime Minister in December 1972, he and Hasluck got on unexpectedly well. He co-operated in Whitlam's experiment of running the country with a two-man executive in Labor's first fortnight in power. The Whitlam government consisted entirely of members with no previous experience of ministerial office, and in its early months meetings of the executive council often took the form of an advanced seminar in government, with the Governor-General finding himself welcome in the congenial role of constitutional mentor. In 1974 Whitlam would have extended his term, but Hasluck declined because of his wife's health, and Sir John Kerr was appointed. Just as it was said that if Cleopatra's nose had been half an inch shorter the course of ancient history would have been different, so it might be said that the course of Australian political history might have been different but for Lady Hasluck's hips.

While Governor-General, Hasluck recovered his vocation as a historian. He completed the two-volume history of 'The Government and the People' in the *Official History of Australia During the Second World War*. In retirement in Perth he wrote a number of valuable histories from the viewpoint of a participant-observer: *Mucking About*, *Diplomatic Witness*, *A Time for Building*, *Shades of Darkness*. Arguably, in the contemplative life of scholarship he found satisfactions which eluded him in the active world of politics. He continued to be productive until shortly before his death at the age of 87 in January 1993.

In this essay I have concentrated somewhat discursively on the theme of Paul Hasluck as an intellectual in politics, and yet there is so much more for a biographer to deal with. There is the man who wrote poetry, and in so doing perhaps revealed more of himself than in any of his writings about his public career. There is the pedantic Hasluck, turning aside from matters of high policy to correct the grammar or the literary style of a public servant. There is the lover of music, both classical and jazz, who bought a piece of land in the Darling Range so that he could go there alone at weekends to play both at a satisfying *fortissimo*.

Perhaps there is even a streak of the larrikin. Reg Marsh, a senior public servant in Territories in the early 1960s, tells the story of accompanying the Minister to Katherine in 1960 for the unveiling of a

centenary monument to the explorer John McDouall Stuart. The ceremony took place, the speeches were made, the formal dinner followed, and then came a dance. At about 9.30 pm, the Minister could stand it no longer. He took off his jacket, elbowed the bongo drummer out of the way, and played the bongo drums with great skill and efficiency for the rest of the evening.

And finally there is the story of the old man who, sensing that he had not long to live, had himself driven to see the Anglican Dean of Perth. Had he much experience of State funerals, inquired Sir Paul. No, replied the Dean, not much; he was fairly new to the job, and his only attendance at a State funeral had been the Catholic archbishop. Well, said Sir Paul, he might have to take one soon, and precise instructions were given. And so it was that after an impressive Anglican ritual at St George's Cathedral, as the coffin was borne down the aisle, four trombonists stood at the High Altar and played 'When the Saints Come Marching In'.