

Threats Without Enemies: Rethinking Australia's Security

Edited by Gary Smith & StJohn Kettle

Pluto Press, Sydney, 1992. pp. 332. \$19.95 (pb).
ISBN 0 949138 89 4.

Reviewed by Brian Martin

Are you looking for an informative and well-argued presentation of the case for reforming Australian 'security' policies that are currently based mostly on military means? If so, this is an ideal book for you. The contributors make sane and sensible comments throughout. For example:

- The debate on Australian 'security' has been hijacked by military perspectives.
- Besides military security, other important dimensions are economic, environmental and community security.
- Changes in international relations since the end of the cold war have important implications for Australian security.
- The Australian government could play a more positive role in the region, especially in relation to human rights and promoting healthier economic development in poor countries.
- Australian military defence could be made much more efficient and appropriate.

The book is a product of the Secure Australia Project, a group of nine people 'dedicated to common security for Australians and their neighbours' (p. 7), and is a successor to *The New Australian Militarism* (Pluto, 1990).

The quality of writing is uniformly high. The arguments are clear, the examples pertinent, the information up-to-date and the tone usually sober and earnest. There is little passionate rhetoric here. The social concerns of the authors come through in the issues chosen and the arguments made.

The issues and arguments are undoubtedly important. 'Security' in conventional strategic rhetoric means security against military threats, to be deterred or defended against by military means. The purpose of this book is to challenge this rhetoric and to open up discussions of 'security' to a range of wider concerns. Rather than security being an issue solely for military planners, it should be an issue for all people. Furthermore, much more attention should be given to threats—military and nonmilitary—affecting indigenous peoples, women, the poor and the exploited.

Although the book challenges the well-entrenched perspectives of military-centred planning, the alternative presented also has its limits. The contributors discussed the book together and many of them commented on each

other's chapters. Perhaps this explains why their critique is so cautious. The assumptions underlying the perspective of the Secure Australia Project—especially those assumptions shared with the military-strategic establishment that is being questioned—highlight both the strengths and limitations of the critique.

Essentially, most of these authors come across as moderate reformers. They would not be totally out of place as heads of government departments under an enlightened government. Their challenge seems primarily to policies rather than to social and organisational structures. It seems to imply that they would be happy with a streamlined and refocussed Australian military defence system, with much greater government attention and funding for environmental problems, human rights, social justice, conflict resolution and peacekeeping in international affairs. Almost all of this is seen as something to be promoted by the Australian government.

The book seems aimed at decision-makers in government and the intellectuals who might influence these decision-makers. Peace movements are mentioned only in passing, if at all. Nowhere is there a discussion of the dynamics of peace movements or even the decline of the Australian peace movement since the mid 1980s.

Nor is nonviolence given more than a mention, with the exception of Di Bretherton who deals perceptively with violence and nonviolence in everyday life at the community level. Considering the importance of nonviolence in the 1989 revolutions in Eastern Europe—which created the conditions for a radical reassessment of strategic doctrine—this omission is surprising. The important roles of nonviolence in social movements, as both method and worldview, and its potential as a long-term alternative to military defence, are not examined. Perhaps this was considered too radical for the target audience. Or perhaps it is simply that the Secure Australia Project accepts the 'need' for military defence, as stated in its October 1992 'call for an inquiry into Australia's security' (reproduced on pp. 331-332).

Few of the contributors give any sustained examination of the driving forces behind war and other social problems—whether there are taken to be the state system, capitalism, military establishments or patriarchy—and how to undermine them. The assumption seems to be that good will at the top is what is required to build on the less tense 'security environment' since the collapse of the Soviet bloc. The possibility of a regression to major-power military confrontation is not addressed sufficiently.

Indeed, the overall tone is optimistic. Several contributors make a point of praising Australian government initiatives, for example on chemical disarmament. A more critical approach would have been appropriate on Senator Gareth Evans' initiatives in Cambodia which, some would argue (but not in this book), have aided the designs of the Khmer Rouge. The reform agenda behind the book seems

Reviews—Social & Political

to have muted a really penetrating critique of Australian foreign policy.

Even the book's own basic message, namely that the debate about 'security' should be opened up, is not fully incorporated in all chapters. Gary Smith makes the excellent point that defence doesn't just mean military defence: 'A military planner who seeks multibillion dollar appropriations for *defence* and *security* is utilising a discourse that anchors onto basic community values in order to make a sectional appeal for funds.' (p. 26). Yet Graeme Cheeseman's chapter, entitled 'An effective and affordable defence for Australia,' deals almost entirely with Australian military forces.

In summary, *Threats Without Enemies* is a valuable book with a clear aim, to broaden discussion on 'security.' For information and arguments it is excellent, but peace groups and nonviolent activists will need to look elsewhere for insights on developing grassroots campaigns.

Quiet Dissenter: The life and thoughts of an Australian Pacifist, Eleanor May Moore, 1875-1949

By Malcolm Saunders

Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1993.

pp. xiv + 398, \$16 (pb), ISBN 0 7315 13215

Reviewed by Kenneth Rivett

Eleanor Moore was born in Victoria to English immigrant parents. Her father believed sufficiently in what was to become a tradition of Australian intervention in overseas wars to have crossed the Tasman as a young man in order to fight the Maoris. A carpenter who became a builder and contractor, he could afford to let two of his daughters accept secondary school scholarships to the prestigious Presbyterian Ladies College in Melbourne, where Eleanor edited the school magazine and 'was a very bright though not obviously brilliant student'. She trained and worked as a stenographer, at first full time, then as a temporary or part-time freelance so as to give her more opportunity to work for peace.

Here her involvement began through the influence of Dr Charles Strong who, after being forced out of the Presbyterian Church for heresy, had founded the very free Australian Church, of which the Moores were members by 1910 or earlier. It was Strong who in 1915 initiated the formation of the Sisterhood of International Peace, believing that women had a distinctive contribution in this field and would not be equally effective in a mixed-sex peace society.

The Sisterhood was to become the Australian section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

Strong opposed participation in the Boer War and the First World War though a recent article, again by Saunders, suggests that he was never an absolute pacifist. Moore was, and would maintain that stand until her death in 1949, without the support of Christian belief. Under her leadership the Australian section of WILPF did the same, unlike the League's international executive in Geneva, with which it clashed.

Moore's biographer poses the vital question: did she face the possibility—most would say the probability—of a pacifist nation being occupied by the armed forces of a foreign power? Saunders shows clearly that she did, but that she may not have realised the nature of fascism. Conversations and correspondence during the last eleven years of her life cause me to concur in both verdicts.

Moore never married. Given her character, her attractiveness, intellectual and physical, and her membership not only of the Australian Church but also of Reverend Fred Sinclair's Free Religious Fellowship, which included many of Melbourne's radical élite, there are likely to have been offers. Manuscripts she left show her strongly and sensibly critical of 'the conventional masculine point of view' about women, and of men who adhered to it. She seems to have rejected marriage deliberately in favour of a life centring on the home of her parents, who died at 91 and 96 and for whom she and two other unmarried sisters were to do much.

One facet of Moore's pacifist and feminist convictions is particularly interesting and calls to mind the unsentimental attitude of today's feminists towards their own sex. Early participants in the women's peace movement were almost all agreed that women were more peace minded than men. Moore, with memories of the hard-fought conscription referenda, was unable to agree. Later, when Axis aggression posed a hideous choice between responding with war or with the real but limited power of nonviolence, such differences as may exist between men and women were simply irrelevant. Most feminists of the time, male and female, chose as the lesser evil the burning to death of countless women and children, the millions of battlefield deaths and the risking of still greater disasters, to be exemplified by the two atomic bombs. Others of us thought differently.

'I may not have fought the good fight', says a feminist as she thinks back into married life at the end of Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*, 'but I have kept the faith.' Moore *did* fight the good fight, pressing her views on a largely unheeding Australia and becoming a highly respected figure among Melbourne pacifists. Some may regret that her life should now be written by a male. But surely there is a place for the type of bibliography that reflects a man's admiration for a fine woman, just as there has always been for