CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

SAN FRANCISCO TREATY-MAKING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR NEW ZEALAND

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There are those in New Zealand who feel that the events we are remembering today, at least insofar as they relate to the Australia New Zealand United States Security Treaty (ANZUS), are best forgotten. It is ironic that, while relations with Japan these days are good and certainly non-controversial, New Zealand is now a ‘friend’ rather than an ally of the United States and her relations with Australia are strained by the current minimization of New Zealand’s defence capability. In 1951 Sir Carl Berendsen, New Zealand’s delegate to the San Francisco conference, spoke of New Zealand’s intention to play its part as a good neighbour in the Pacific and called on Japan ‘to fulfill our trust’. He spoke of ANZUS as a reaffirmation ‘that these three countries have established a true and lasting comradeship and goodwill and common trust and confidence’.1 Times change.

It was the debate over the nature of the Japanese peace treaty which drew New Zealand into new and more sophisticated relationships with the United States and with Australia. The generous peace treaty and the security treaties which accompanied it involved a new level of diplomatic activity and unaccustomed strategic thinking for New Zealand. This involved a challenge to New Zealand’s traditional relationship with the United Kingdom though the implications of the new situation were not recognized by the politicians at that time and a reassessment of this relationship was not seen as necessary in 1951.

Security Considerations

The war in the Pacific, the lengthy negotiations to establish a peace treaty and the changing balance of forces as the Cold War closed in, forced New

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Zealand and Australia to think about their relationship in strategic terms. They had to recognize their geographically anomalous position. As one writer has put it, they are ‘two outliers of the west perched under the very diverse, dynamic but unstructured realm of Eastern Asia’. By the Canberra Pact in 1944 New Zealand and Australia accepted a broad mutuality of interest in the Pacific and in 1951 the concept that New Zealand and Australia constitute a single or shared strategic entity was a given.

But the geographical facts do not mean that the strategic concerns of the two countries are identical. Twelve hundred miles separate New Zealand and Australia. In 1900 when the Australian federation was formed, these miles were seen as 1200 good reasons why New Zealand should not join. The distance argument, irrelevant now and probably irrelevant then has, however, served down the years to put a particular cast on the relationship between the two countries and to amplify New Zealand’s sense of its own isolation. In the debate about New Zealand defence policy these days the claim that New Zealand is ‘surrounded by the largest moat in the world’ can be heard.

The logic of geography also dictates that Australia, most of which lies well to the north of New Zealand, should have greater awareness of the ‘arc of instability’ which constitutes its ‘near north’. These are factors which contribute to the different security evaluations in the two countries and are one of the reasons why in the negotiations over the peace treaty the New Zealand stance is frequently described as ‘less extreme’, ‘less vociferous’, ‘less forceful’ than that of Australia.

If a sense of isolation can be seen as a thread running through the history of New Zealand’s external relations, what has changed between 1951 and 2001 is New Zealand’s attitude to this. In 1951 New Zealand governments wanted a ‘voice’ in international affairs and felt bound to participate in, and contribute to, defence organizations in an attempt to influence Western policy. The centres of danger were seen to be in Europe and, if New Zealand made a contribution there, so the argument went, others would reciprocate and defend New Zealand in the Pacific. Reliance on others was seen as involving obligations and there was a recognition that New Zealand, even with Australia, could not stand alone. The extended negotiations for a Japanese Peace Treaty forced New Zealand to recognize, reluctantly, that the United States held the key to peace and security in the

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3 See for example W. David McIntyre, Background to the ANZUS Pact, Canterbury University Press 1995, pp. 218, 241, 244.