CHAPTER 1
THE ROAD TO DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION: 1931–1941

One outcome of the Washington Conference of 1921–1922, with the threat of Japan apparently diminished and British prestige in the Pacific reaffirmed, was the dawning of an era of complacency in Australian foreign relations. If the country’s early leaders had been relatively outspoken and assertive in regard to Australia’s unique national interests, the conservative governments of Stanley Bruce (1923–1929) and Joseph Lyons (1932–1939), along with most members of the Labor opposition, were now hesitant in questioning their loyalty to Britain. The Washington Conference marked the end of the ‘Australian crisis’ and, as Neville Meaney concludes, left the country’s leaders ‘unable to prepare properly for [a] greater global conflagration’ as the world slid towards another great war.33

Nonetheless, the Australian government made tentative steps towards engaging with the region. The Great Depression had convinced many of the need to extend the scope of Australian trade — then heavily oriented,

33 See Neville Meaney’s concluding remarks in Australia and World Crisis, pp.512-513.
and strictly regulated, to favour the British market — to neighbouring countries. In 1934, John Latham, the Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs, led what he called Australia’s ‘first mission of a diplomatic character’ to foreign nations. The Australian Eastern Mission visited the Dutch East Indies, Singapore, Malaya, French Indochina, China, Japan and the Philippines, paving the way for trade commissioners to be appointed to China and Japan in 1935. Hitherto, diplomacy had been within the prime minister’s portfolio, but in the wake of the Mission in 1936 a Department of External Affairs (today’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) was established as a standalone body in the Commonwealth government.

Regardless of this, as Latham told the Shanghai Times during his stay in China, the ‘diplomatic character’ of Australian engagement would, at least for the time being, extend no further than trade:
As far as diplomatic representation is concerned Great Britain has provided for us, and at present I cannot see that any advantage would be gained by separate representation. I would stress however that Australia is a self-governing country and, as such, could appoint diplomatic representatives as she so desired. But both the interests of my country and our natural loyalty to Great Britain make it desirable that there should be unity in matters of major importance.34

Despite such prevarication in Canberra, from the 1920s a movement made up of writers, public intellectuals and educators, some of whom also served in state and federal politics, agitated at various forums and through their writings in favour of stronger ties between Australia and the countries of the region. Foremost amongst them was Frederic Eggleston. Beginning his working life as a barrister in Melbourne, Eggleston had been, along with John Latham and Robert Garran, a member of the Australian delegation to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. In 1927, he was the principal Australian representative at the second conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR), a quasi-political organisation of thinkers and policymakers from Pacific nations, including the US, China, Japan and Canada, which met periodically to discuss shared security concerns and to promote cultural exchange. In 1929, Eggleston led the Australian delegation attending the third IPR conference in Nara and Kyoto, and the sixth at Yosemite in the United States in 1936, at which the economist Douglas Copland was also present. Eggleston also frequently published essays in the IPR journal Pacific Affairs.35

In 1933, Eggleston co-founded, with Latham and Garran, the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA), which today remains one of Australia’s leading foreign relations think tanks. Eggleston was chairman of the editorial board of the AIIA journal Austral-Asiatic Bulletin from its founding in 1937 until, on the basis of a distinguished public career, he was appointed the first Australian Minister (equivalent to an ambassador) to China in July 1941. An open-minded internationalist, Eggleston enjoyed a reputation as Australia’s leading commentator on Pacific affairs. He published prolifically to promote what, in 1930, he described as the nation’s ‘Pacific sense’:

What we need in Australia is the development of a Pacific sense. We are insular enough, but we do not have that sense of the sea and our surroundings which is generally developed in an island people. We should realise that the Pacific is one of the most interesting areas of the world’s surface, that it is one of the most beautiful, that it is a good a place for a holiday as any other part of the world, and that our economic future is bound up with it.36

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34 Exchange of Australian and Chinese professors is likely in the future’, Shanghai Times, 7 May 1934, cited along with a further discussion of the Australian Eastern Mission in Timothy Kendall, Within China’s Orbit?: China through the eyes of the Australian Parliament, Canberra: Department of Parliamentary Services, 2007, p.42.
Warren Osmond writes that Frederic Eggleston’s career challenges ‘the common view that Australia’s independent foreign policy began with [Minister for External Affairs] Dr. HV Evatt in the 1940s; a ‘shallow’ view ‘which overlooks the growth of an international affairs movement (originally an intra-imperial debating circle) before and after the First World War’. Examining this movement in greater depth, James Cotton concludes that a distinctly ‘Australian School’ of international relations thinking emerged during the 1920s. With the structure of the Empire-Commonwealth undergoing great change and the League of Nations heralding new possibilities for regional and global cooperation, Eggleston — with others including Keith Hancock and Walter Crocker, both of whom were later professors at ANU — was a leading figure in an early school of thinkers who responded to a changing world with enthusiasm and foresight. In 1947, employing a term that had only recently been coined in Canada, Eggleston described Australia as a ‘small or middle power’, one with two strategies open to it: ‘to seek friends and make alliances, or to seek a solution for the problems of power in an international scheme.

Like most Australians with an awareness of the Pacific, Eggleston was mainly concerned with the rise of Japan. His participation in the 1929 IPR conference ‘gratified instincts long starved’: he was awestruck by the organisation, efficiency and sense of civic consciousness that he observed in a country whose emergence into modernity was ‘one of the most remarkable intellectual achievements which history records’, and ‘distinguished [Japan] with the greatest nations of history’. At the same time, Japan presented a challenge to Australia:

What has Australia to say to all this change, fraught with so many tremendous possibilities? Where will she be in fifty years time when the ‘unchanging East’ has become a new power in the world? So far as I can see, while the East is awakening, Australia is putting herself to sleep like Japan did three hundred years ago under the Shoguns, behind restrictions and tariffs.

By contrast, Eggleston found China weak and unstable. As an Australian liberal in the tradition of Alfred Deakin, he was unsettled by the ideological fervour he encountered in Shanghai: ‘China will have to ignore the teaching of Sun Yat Sen. ... a farrago of half-baked political radicalism’. Despite this, he embraced the cause of the Chinese Nationalists, hoping that the new government in Nanking would be successful in ‘[surmounting] the difficulties attending the inauguration of a new regime in so gigantic a territory’. Although sceptical that this goal could be achieved quickly,

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40 Osmond, Frederic Eggleston, p.141.
41 Osmond, Frederic Eggleston, p.142.
he predicted that the country would eventually become a regional power. In 1930, he wrote that this would ‘logically involve the removal or modification of special treaty provisions which have governed the relations of other nations and China.’ 42 Eggleston was, in effect, advocating the abolition of ‘extraterritoriality’, the noxious system of legal and territorial privileges that the foreign trading powers had imposed on China since the 1840s. Twelve years later, as Australia’s representative in Chungking, Eggleston would play a role in bringing this iniquitous system to an end.

POLICY WITHOUT ‘THE MORAL ASPECT’

In 1931, the Republic of China appeared to be more unified, stable and economically hopeful than at any time since the abdication of the Ch’ing emperor in 1912. The president and generalissimo, Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石, had brought his Northern Expedition to a successful conclusion: after launching a military campaign in the southern province of Kwangtung in 1927 he had struck north to wrest control of the country from warlords who had created personal fiefdoms following the collapse of central government rule in 1916.

When he captured Nanking from the warlord Sun Chuan-fang 孫傳芳 in April 1927, Chiang made it the capital of the Chinese republic (it had last been a political capital during the early Ming dynasty, in the fourteenth century). As the successor to the ‘Father of the Nation’, Sun Yat-sen 孫中山, Chiang now had the dead revolutionary entombed in a grand mausoleum on Purple Mountain on the eastern outskirts of the city. Like many revolutionaries and nationalists, Sun had detested the old dynastic capital of Peking for its ‘feudal air’ and its association with the alien Manchu Ch’ing dynasty. After leading his troops north and taking the defunct imperial city, Chiang renamed the city Peiping 北平, ‘northern

peace' or 'the north pacified'. It was known by this name until the communist revolution of 1949.43

The final triumph of the Northern Expedition came when Chiang won over the 'Young Marshall' Chang Hsueh-liang 張學良, the military leader of the region of northeast China known as Manchuria, who took a stand against the Japanese as they extended their control over the area. 'Chang Hsueh-liang may be justly commended on taking this bold step in deference to popular wishes and in defiance of the imperialist dictates of our island neighbour', declared an editorial in *The China Critic*, a liberal English-language Shanghai news magazine in the new year of 1929, when the Nationalist Blue Sky White Sun flag was raised, for the first time, from southern Kwangtung to Manchuria in the north. The editorial crowed: 'Any cynic who has believed in the impossibility of a united China has only his own face to slap.'44 But such optimism was to be short lived.

At about 10:30 on the evening of 18 September 1931, soldiers of the Japanese Army detonated explosives at a railway line near Mukden, the capital of Liaoning province. The Japanese were garrisoned near the city to protect the South Manchuria Railway and other properties that Japan had claimed from Russia following the 1904–1905 war. The army's commanders claimed the attack was the work of Chinese nationalist subversives and, initially without the knowledge of Tokyo, they used it as a pretext to occupy not only Liaoning, but also the provinces of Kirin and Heilungkiang. These three north-eastern Chinese provinces were known in English as Manchuria.

Despite the relative success of the Northern Expedition, Chiang's fear of subversion by the Communist Party that had been in coalition with the Nationalists for years had already led him to order a massacre of hundreds of trade union members and suspected Communist agents in Shanghai and other cities. Key leaders survived the purge — including Mao Tse-tung 毛澤東 and Chou En-lai 周恩来 — and, having fled to the hinterlands, they launched what would become a two-decade-long guerrilla war against the government. So, despite the egregious behaviour of the Japanese, Chiang was not interested in taking action in response to the Mukden Incident; he went so far as to request that Chang Hsueh-liang's forces offer no resistance. The Nationalist leader's priority was to crush communist opposition to his power, that is 'to quell internal rebellion before resisting external threats' 抗外必先安內; it was the beginning of what the historian Jay Taylor calls a 'policy of temporary appeasement [which] was to last six years', until Japan's invasion of China proper in July 1937.45 For now, Chiang hoped that the League of Nations would come to China's aid against Japan's occupation of Manchuria.

At China's request, the League dispatched a multinational delegation (made up of representatives from the US, Germany, Italy and France) led by the British Lord Lytton. The delegation visited north China, Manchuria and Japan to assess the situation although, by the time it arrived in Manchuria in mid-1932, the Japanese had already established


a puppet state there called Manchukuo. The delegation produced the Lytton Report, a document that prevaricated over whether Japan or China had authored the Mukden Incident. The report’s ‘only bold assertion’ was to cast doubt over whether Manchukuo had been established ‘by a genuine and spontaneous independence movement’ in the region, as the Japanese claimed.46

As the League debated Lytton’s findings in Geneva in late 1932 and early 1933, smaller member states, including Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and Spain — all concerned with the rise of militant fascism on their own borders — urged strong action against what they regarded as overt Japanese aggression in China. France, Great Britain and Italy, by contrast, emphasised the complexity of the situation and urged the League to appease rather than to condemn Japan. Crucially, in the eyes of Britain’s representatives, it would have been impossible to impose sanctions against Japan without American support. While the United States had been instrumental in founding the League, it was not itself a member state and had no interest in taking any action. In the end, the League refused to recognise Manchukuo as an independent state, which led Japan to quit the League in protest in 1933. In 1934, the abdicated emperor of the Manchu Ch’ing dynasty, Aisin-Gioro Puyi 愛新覺羅·溥儀, was installed as the Kang-te 康德 Emperor of Manchukuo. The puppet state would survive as long as the Japanese Empire held sway in the region.

As for China’s protestations, a headline that ran in the influential Hearst Press encapsulated the American and to some extent the broader Western reaction to the issue of Japanese aggression in China: ‘WE SYMPATHIZE, BUT IT IS NOT OUR CONCERN’. 47 The diplomat and historian Lachlan Strahan describes a similar reaction among Australians. Despite ‘some diffuse popular sympathy in certain quarters’ for China’s struggle with an aggressive Japan, and regardless of the efforts of organisations like the AIIA to promote a better understanding of the strategic importance of the situation, most Australians — thirty percent of whom were unemployed in 1932 — were apathetic toward events in faraway Manchuria. 48

Frederic Eggleston was among the small group of public figures who sought to educate Australia about developments in China’s northeast, but he too, being convinced that there was no practical policy alternative, advocated a policy of appeasement. To punish Japan with sanctions would, he wrote in 1935, be ‘misguided — and ... certainly full of danger to Australia’. 49 The same year, George Pearce, the former Minister of Defence who had supported the study of Japanese at Duntroon years earlier, described Canberra’s position in the following way:

Top: Morrison during his early days in Peking, 1894; bottom: Morrison at Wangfuching Road, later also known as ‘Morrison Street’, c.1910 — the original captions read: ‘Myself and one of the lions at my entrance’. (Courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales)
The Government remained suspicious of her [Japan’s] ultimate intentions, but with British naval strength reduced below the safety point, and with American aid discounted, there was no policy open to her other than trying to be friendly with Japan and to give her no excuse to adopt an aggressive policy vis-à-vis the Commonwealth, and to rejoice (irrespective of the moral aspect) every time Japan advanced more deeply into Manchukuo and North China.50

Years later, John Powell, a Shanghai-born American journalist who covered the Sino-Japanese War during the 1930s and 1940s, was more blunt in his assessment: the Mukden Incident marked the ‘real beginning of the Second World War’.51

GEORGE E MORRISON IN CHINA AND AUSTRALIA

In the early 1930s, Canberra was only just beginning to assume its official role as the capital of Australia. It was a city of under ten thousand people, and sheep grazed near the steps of the recently opened Parliament House. In their winning design for the city, Canberra’s American planners, Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin, had nominated a site for a future national university. They had chosen a parcel of land, what they called ‘a situation of gentle undulation’ at the foot of Black Mountain, which they anticipated would become the city’s most picturesque location.52 The story of China and The Australian National University, the theme of the present work, starts nearby at the Australian Institute of Anatomy (now the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia).

The Institute was opened to the public in 1931 and soon became known as the home of the preserved heart of the celebrated racehorse Phar Lap, and a skull alleged to be that of the bushranger Ned Kelly. In the 1930s, the Institute was nothing less than a ‘de facto national museum’ and ‘the centre of much of the town’s cultural life’.53 The city’s only tertiary institution, Canberra University College, held classes at the Institute; literary and artistic societies also met there, sharing rooms with platypus and Tasmanian tiger specimens preserved in jars of formaldehyde. The Institute hardly seemed to be the likely focus for a campaign to raise Australian awareness of China’s struggle with Japan. But, as William Joseph Liu 劉光褔, an Australian-Chinese businessman and community leader from Sydney, tells it, this is exactly what happened when he visited Colin MacKenzie, the Institute of Anatomy’s first Director, at the time of the Mukden Incident. ‘I’m always glad that I went down to Canberra in September, 1931,’ Liu wrote:

We met by accident Sir Colin MacKenzie, the world-famed anatomist. ... Naturally we talked of China. Sir Colin’s dream had been the founding of a lectureship in memory of [George] Morrison. Sir Colin graciously gave his patronage to the Sino-Australian movement, and the Chinese community in Australia did the rest. This movement will grow.54

George Ernest Morrison was an adventurer, doctor and journalist from Geelong, Victoria. After studying medicine at the University of Edinburgh and travelling in Europe and America, Morrison arrived in Shanghai at the age of thirty-one to embark on a five thousand-kilometre trek to the Burmese border — a journey vividly recounted in his first book, _An Australian in China_ (1895).

As the first China correspondent for the London _Times_ during the years 1897–1912, he witnessed, and at times played an active role in, some of the most crucial events to shape modern China: the Boxer Rebellion, the decline and collapse of the Ch’ing dynasty and the rise of Japan as a challenge both to Russian and to British power. After the Republic of China was established in early 1912, Morrison served as a political advisor to its first president, Yuan Shih-k’ai. Such was his influence that he was dubbed ‘Morrison of Peking’ or, in Australia, ‘Chinese Morrison.’ The bustling commercial promenade of Wangfuching 弐府井, the street on which he lived, was for much of the Republican period known as ‘Morrison Street’, a testament to his prominence and influence in the old imperial capital. The studio which once housed his extensive library survived until 2007, when it was unceremoniously demolished in preparation for the 2008 summer Olympic Games.55

Morrison rose to prominence in 1898 after publishing a secret Russian ultimatum that demanded that the imperial Chinese government lease Port Arthur (now part of the city of Dalian) to the Tsar. At the time, the British authorities paid little heed to this seemingly obscure, and possibly dubious, ultimatum and, writes Cyril Pearl, Morrison ‘[risked] his reputation on the truth of an uncorroborated report’ when the _Times_ ran his story on 25 March that year. But then:

On 27th March the Port Arthur convention, giving Russia everything she had demanded, was signed in Peking. When the House [of Commons] met, two days later, Mr J. Dillon

54 John Sleeman, _White China: An Austral-Asian Sensation_, Sydney: Alert Publishing, 1933, pp.341-342. _White China_ was one of five books and pamphlets that Liu produced in collaboration with the independent Sydney publisher John Sleeman to promote trade with China and to raise awareness about the Manchurian crisis. The others were: _The Trouble in Manchuria — and What it Means to the World_ (1931); _An Appreciation, addressed to John Sleeman_ (1933); _Bowden-Liu Communications_ (1936); and, _Chinese are Sports in the Matter of Sino-Aussie Relations_ (1936). Liu praised his collaborator as a friend of China, but Sleeman’s pen was also for hire by competitors. He was later paid by the Japanese Mitsubishi corporation to write an anti-White China tract, _Japan and Australia: Canberra’s Calamitous Attack on Australian Prosperity_, in which he condemned the prospects for Australian trade with China and urged stronger ties with Japan. See Sophie Loy-Wilson, ‘Peanuts and Publicists: “Letting Australian Friends Know the Chinese Side of the Story” in Interwar Sydney’, _History Australia_, vol.6, no.1 (2009): 6.1-6.20.

CHINA & ANU — DIPLOMATS, ADVENTURERS, SCHOLARS

(Mayo E.) put a question to the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: ‘I beg to ask … if he can explain how it is that The Times correspondent in Peking has been able on several occasions recently to publish facts of the utmost public importance several days before the Foreign Office had obtained any information in reference to them?’

Morrison ‘had been an early admirer of Japan, and found little to quarrel with until after the defeat of Russia in 1905’, wrote the historian CP FitzGerald, a figure who will feature prominently below. ‘Then gradually he came to see that, as the Chinese put it, “the tiger was driven out by the front gate, while the wolf was admitted by the back gate”. Japan was going to be worse than Russia.’ Eleven years after his death in 1920, the Mukden Incident corroborated Morrison’s prescience. George Morrison was by far the most influential Australian involved in Chinese affairs during the early twentieth century and there could not have been a better namesake for a lectureship aimed at raising awareness of the country’s present struggle.

On 7 October 1931, shortly after their first meeting in the national capital, Colin MacKenzie wrote to William Liu with the following proposal:

The Australian Institute of Anatomy has been founded by the Commonwealth Government for the advancement of medical science and can be regarded as the first unit of the National University of Australia. ... At the present time relationships between Australia and the East, and especially China, are the subject of increasing attention, and … the cultural aspect is as important as the commercial. A great Australian, the late Dr. Morrison, laboured hard in the interests of China, and I am venturing to suggest the foundation of a Lectureship in his memory to be delivered in the Lecture Theatre of the Institute of Anatomy annually on the subject of Ethnology. If such were founded by Chinese citizens it would be a remarkable gesture of scientific friendship from China to Australia, and especially if the first lecture were delivered by the Consul-General of China.

Thereupon, Liu and MacKenzie contacted William Ah Ket 麦錫祥, a barrister at the Victorian Supreme Court, to enlist his help in raising funds for the lectureship within the Melbourne Chinese community. MacKenzie himself made the first donation of £10 and, by mid-January 1932, the group had raised an endowment of £402 pounds (the equivalent of $34,000 in today’s currency). A permanent committee was established to select a

56 Cyril Pearl, Morrison of Peking, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1967, pp.97-98. The quotation refers to John Dillon, the representative of what was then the British parliamentary constituency of East Mayo, in Ireland.


suitable speaker each year that consisted of the Commonwealth Minister for Health, the Director of the Australian Institute of Anatomy, William Ah Ket, William Liu and the Chinese Consul-General in Sydney, Wei-ping Chen.*

The announcement in early 1932 of the lectureship made a splash in the Australian press and abroad, with reports in the *South China Morning Post* in Hong Kong, as well as in China. William Liu, who was visiting Shanghai on business at the time of the announcement, modestly told the *North China Daily News* ‘that actually he took a very insignificant part in the matter [of the Lectureship], crediting it ‘in the main to the great enthusiasm of Sir Colin Mackenzie.* Liu also spoke to *The China Critic*, a popular English-language weekly magazine produced in Shanghai by some of China’s leading intellectuals, including Hu Shih, Lin Yutang and Quentin Pan. *The Critic* lauded the Morrison Lectureship as meeting the ‘urgent need of a better understanding between Chinese and other nations of the world’.62

Beginning with Wei-ping Chen’s inaugural oration in May 1932, for the first ten years of the George E Morrison Lectures in Ethnology, as the annual talk was formally known, invited speakers tended to discuss politically neutral aspects of Chinese culture and history. William Liu later remarked that Chun-jien Pao, Chen’s successor as Consul-General, had ‘always been most emphatic that the Morrison orator should refrain from discussing politics’.63 Chen, who had known Morrison in China, concluded the inaugural lecture by expressing an ‘earnest hope that the Australian people will extend to my countrymen sympathy and trust and that the great nation of China may be united with the great Anglo-Saxon race to preserve the peace of the world’.

On 7 July 1937, the Japanese used a military clash between their forces and those of the Chinese Republican government stationed at Lukouchiao, known in English as Marco Polo Bridge, to the southwest of Peiping, as a pretext to invade China proper. By August, the Japanese Imperial Army had reached Shanghai and, in December, it marched through the city gates of the Chinese capital, Nanking. Over the following weeks,
the invaders massacred hundreds of thousands of civilians in that city alone — an atrocity which soon became known as the ‘Rape of Nanking’. 65

In Australia, the Lyons government and the Labor opposition continued to support a policy of appeasement towards Japan, but widespread public outrage welled up as news of the Rape was reported in the Australian press in early 1938. Church groups and university students staged protests, while at major ports in Fremantle, Melbourne, Geelong and Sydney waterside workers launched strikes, embargoes and industrial actions directed against Japanese exports. The most famous of these disputes occurred in November 1938 when members of the Waterside Worker’s Federation at Port Kembla, New South Wales, refused to load more than 200,000 tons of scrap iron bound for Japan. Canberra was unmoved. In the words of the Prime Minister, Joseph Lyons: ‘the government cannot permit any section to usurp its functions. It is the responsibility of the government to determine what attitude shall be adopted to the Sino-Japanese dispute.’ 66 Robert Menzies, then Attorney-General, invoked the Transport Workers Act to compel the watersiders to load the iron and to prevent additional union groups from joining their strike. Public sentiment was overwhelmingly against the government on this issue, and Menzies’ tough stance earned him the nickname ‘Pig-Iron Bob’.

It was Menzies who also presided over the establishment of Australia’s first diplomatic legations. In November 1937, Italy joined Japan and Nazi Germany’s ‘Anti-Comintern Pact’ against the Soviet Union, which looked increasingly to be more than just a memorandum of understanding between three powers with a common hatred of Communism. A war on two fronts appeared imminent when, less than one year later, the German Reichskanzler Adolf Hitler annexed the Sudetenland in northern Czechoslovakia. Following the death of Joseph Lyons, Menzies was sworn in as prime minister on 26 April 1939. ‘Little given as I am’, Menzies declared in his inauguration speech, ‘to encouraging the exaggerated ideas of Dominion independence and separatism which exist in some minds’, he nonetheless made the case for an important shift in Australian foreign policy. While Australia’s interests should still be ‘guided by [Britain’s] knowledge and affected by her decisions’ with regard to European affairs, Menzies declared that:

The problems of the Pacific are different. What Great Britain calls the Far East is to us the near north. ... I have become convinced that, in the Pacific, Australia must regard herself as a principal providing herself with her own information and

65 The Rape of Nanking remains perhaps the most contentious historical issue between China and Japan. The government of the People’s Republic of China declares that some 300,000 people were killed during December 1937 and early 1938, and Japan is frequently charged with denying or downplaying the extent of the atrocity. The most widely-known and sensational study among English and Chinese readers is Iris Chang’s The Rape of Nanking, New York: Basic Books, 1997. Chang’s work is endorsed by the Memorial Hall for Compatriots Killed in the Nanking Massacre by Japanese Forces of Aggression 侵華日軍南京大屠殺遇難同胞紀念館 in Nanking. For a more nuanced and critical study of the Rape, and the historical debates that surround it, see Joshua Fogel, ed., The Nanking Massacre in History and Historiography, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

maintaining her own diplomatic contacts with foreign Powers. I do not mean by this that we are to act in the Pacific as if we were a completely separate Power; we must, of course, act as an integral part of the British Empire. 67

In June 1939, SH Roberts, Challis Chair of History at the University of Sydney, delivered the Eighth Morrison Lecture, *The Gifts of the Old China to the New*. Menzies was in the audience. The speaker echoed the new prime minister’s concern for ‘the exchange of more real information between Australia and China, instead of political speeches and details of hostilities’—an ongoing concern to this day. He appealed for Commonwealth aid ‘to provide facilities for Chinese Studies, as were provided for Japanese Studies at the University of Sydney’. At the end of the oration Chun-jien Pao, the Chinese Consul-General, moved the vote of thanks. If the suggested exchange of ‘real information’ meant the exchange of diplomatic representatives, Pao said that this would make ‘existing cordial Sino-Australia relations’ even closer and ‘form the key to the future of the world which depends upon the understanding of China’. 68

In January 1940, Canberra announced that Richard Casey, a senior politician and diplomat, would head Australia’s first overseas legation, to be established in Washington DC. Writing in the Adelaide *Chronicle*, Roy Curthoys predicted the imminent appointment of an Australian minister to Japan as well. Curthoys noted that: ‘Australians see the Pacific through different eyes from those who have learned their geography out of text books written in the Northern Hemisphere.’ He repeated Menzies’ phrase, the ‘Near North’. 69

John Latham, the head of the 1934 Australian Eastern Mission, was the logical candidate for the Tokyo post. But a federal election, due to be held in September 1940, delayed his appointment. Then, on 27 September, Japan signed a Tripartite Pact of Nonaggression with the fascist states of Italy and Germany. The British High Commission in Canberra argued that: ‘the moment when Japan has signed a political, economic and military alliance with the axis powers’ was not ‘a suitable moment for so distinguished an Australian [as Latham] to go to Tokyo’. 70 The government ignored the protests of the British and despatched Latham to the Japanese capital regardless. His presence, argued Menzies, would bolster ‘anti-Axis diplomatic representation in Tokyo’. 71 In January the following year, the Department of External Affairs decided that it was also time to appoint an envoy to Chiang Kai-shek’s government in its wartime capital of Chungking. In a submission to Cabinet the Department argued that:

70 Letter, RR Sedgewick (Official Secretary, UK High Commission in Australia) to F Strahan (Secretary, Prime Minister’s Department, Canberra), 30 October 1940, in *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-1939*, vol.IV: July 1940-June 1941, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1980, p.239.
71 Letter, Strahan to Sedgewick, 1 November 1940, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy*, pp.241-242.
Establishment of a Legation [in China] at a most unfavourable time and when few reciprocal material benefits can result, will probably create a profound impression on Chinese minds, and have incalculable consequences in our future relations. ... To this end, it might well be regarded as a very valuable insurance premium. 72

Frederic Eggleston’s appointment to Chungking came on 7 July 1941. It was four years to the day since the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, which precipitated the Sino-Japanese War. One week earlier, the Axis powers had formally recognised the ‘Reorganised Government’ in Nanking, a Japanese puppet regime headed by the collaborator Wang Ching-wei 汪精衛; immediately thereafter Chiang Kai-shek’s Republican government severed its ties with both Berlin and Rome. 73 Chun-jien Pao wrote to congratulate Eggleston on his appointment and welcomed a ‘new era in the history of our two nations in the Pacific. ... We are very happy, too, to know that Australia has appointed you who is an authority on Pacific affairs, to be the First Minister accredited to my country. Your arrival there will meet with a genuine warm reception.’ 74

In an address to Melbourne’s Constitutional Club shortly before his departure, Eggleston claimed that China ‘held the key’ to peace in the Pacific. Australia had been ‘too negligent toward the Chinese in the past’. The country had just entered its fifth year of war against Japan and, while ‘dispositions in this war are moving nearer and nearer to Australia’, Eggleston stated that he had ‘not seen sufficient recognition of that fact in [the Australian] community’. His language may well have gone beyond what was expected of a newly appointed diplomat when he charged that: ‘I have been told that I will be in danger of bombs in Chungking,

72 Osmond, Frederic Eggleston, p.203.
73 ‘China and Australia’, The Canberra Times, 8 July 1941, p.2.
Hsu Mo’s Letter of Credence, bearing the signatures of Lin Sen 林森, President of the Republic China, and Foreign Minister Kuo Tai-chi 郭泰祺, 26 July 1941. (Courtesy National Archives of Australia)

Hsu Mo was the first minister of the Republic of China posted to Australia. Born in Soochow in 1893, Hsu attended middle school in Shanghai. In 1916, he graduated with a Bachelor of Law from Peiyang University, Tientsin. After serving as Secretary to the Chinese Legation in Washington DC, he earned his Master of Laws from George Washington University in 1922. Among China’s leading legal scholars and practitioners, Hsu was made Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1931. After his posting to Australia, Hsu served as China’s ambassador to Turkey. In 1945, he was a member of the Chinese delegation to the United Nations Committee of Jurists appointed to establish the International Court of Justice. He died in 1956 at The Hague while serving on the International Court.

Portrait Sketch of Dr. Hsu Mo by Charles Wheeler, pastel and colour on paper, 1943. Born in New Zealand, Wheeler was a successful academic painter based in Melbourne, and winner of the 1933 Archibald Prize. This sketch was published in The Australian magazine, 20 October 1943. (Courtesy National Library of Australia)
but I prefer those bombs to the stink bombs of Australian politics. His comments provoked criticism from Charles Morgan, the Labor member for Reid, in Sydney, who questioned Prime Minister Menzies as to whether he approved of ‘diplomatic representatives of this country making such statements? Menzies responded that Eggleston’s sentiment was ‘one that finds a ready echo in my mind.’

Frederic Eggleston left for Chungking in early September 1941, and a fortnight later China’s first minister to Australia, Hsu Mo 徐濬, arrived in Sydney to a grand public welcome led by a delighted CJ Pao and crowds of local Chinese waving the flag of the Republic of China. Hsu, a former vice-minister for Foreign Affairs and senior jurist, told reporters that China and Australia were ‘in the same hemisphere, and to a great extent we share the same perils.’

75 ‘Peace in Pacific: China Holds Key’, The Canberra Times, 5 August 1941, p.2; and, ‘Dangers in the Pacific’, The Argus (Melbourne), 5 August 1941, p.3.
76 Osmond, Frederic Eggleston, p.206.
78 Dr. Hsu Mo a “Hustler”: Will Begin Work at Once’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 16 September 1941, p.4; and, ‘China’s Tribute to Australia’, The Argus, 17 September 1941, p.4.