

Personality in Foreign Policy

SIR CARL BERENDSEN IN WASHINGTON

IN 1944 when Sir Carl Berendsen became New Zealand's minister in Washington, New Zealand policy-makers were taking a hard look at what New Zealand interests really were. The simple proposition of relying on the British for New Zealand's security was clearly no longer enough and, although there was still a strong feeling in the public and politicians' minds that Britain's security and that of New Zealand were somehow linked, it was clear that new relationships, primarily with the United States, would have to be worked out. The war in the Pacific had demonstrated to New Zealanders that their country, on the southern fringe of the Pacific, must necessarily have some security requirements that differed from those of Britain, on the fringe of Europe.

The legacy of New Zealand's long association with the British imperial system, however, was an attitude and a psychology unexpected in a country of New Zealand's geographical position and size. Not only were New Zealanders accustomed to being part of a team, and one which they perceived to be powerful, capable of winning games and held in some awe and respect by outsiders but, as one of the old white Dominions, they regarded themselves as members of the club's board of management with, therefore, some useful executive experience.

Although New Zealanders had the reputation of not rocking the boat in imperial conferences and although New Zealand had no interest in the constitutional niceties of the imperial relationship, its ministers did not hesitate to speak out on the issues on which they felt strongly. Their loyalty was neither dumb nor blind.¹ New Zealand thus regarded itself as part of the world, and as having a voice in world affairs to a degree to which its geographical position and size might not otherwise have entitled it.

New Zealand too was accustomed to following a cause. From 1935, to the imperial ideal was added the cause of collective security. The New Zealand Labour Party which became the government in that year had

¹ See F. L. W. Wood, 'The Anzac Dilemma', *International Affairs*, XXIX, 2 (April 1953), p. 183 and F. L. W. Wood, *This New Zealand*, Hamilton, 1952, pp. 152-61.

long argued that collective action through the League of Nations was the only means of securing just and lasting peace. In 1936 New Zealand submitted at Geneva a 21-point programme for strengthening the League covenant and, in the cases of Spain, China and Abyssinia, New Zealand condemned aggressors and urged stronger League action.² There was an increasingly high moral tone in New Zealand's voice in international affairs and, at home, there was satisfaction in the grand, independent, and inexpensive gestures that won the country a certain notoriety. The Deputy Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, said in 1938 of New Zealand's stand in the League: 'It was time somebody spoke — the country has to make up its own mind on international problems as a sovereign country...'³

This attitude in the League was accompanied by opposition to the policy of appeasement being followed by the British government. The Prime Minister, M. J. Savage, is reputed to have shamed the Imperial Conference in 1937 with his refusal to accept the notion of peace at almost any price.⁴

Thus the established tenets of New Zealand's pre-war policy can be seen to be acceptance of, and some pride in, the imperial link, accompanied by some suspicion of the deeds and motives of the British politicians and their advisers; belief in the right of small countries to a voice in world affairs and readiness to make the grand gesture on behalf of that voice; belief in collective security as the best hope for world peace and suspicion of the machinations of the great powers in world bodies; belief that force must be opposed whenever it occurred and a consequent hatred of appeasement.

These are the ideas and attitudes which Berendsen took with him to Washington and expanded there. In doing so he was not simply reflecting the policy of the New Zealand government; he was expounding policy positions which were in fact his own. From 1926 until 1943, when he went to Australia as New Zealand's first High Commissioner there, Carl Berendsen was single-handedly the draftsman of New Zealand policy, literally from a cramped backroom.⁵ From 1926 to 1935 he wrote the papers for Imperial Conferences and replied to Dominion Office telegrams for conservative prime ministers whose relative lack of interest in external affairs reflected the attitude of most New Zealanders.⁶ In 1935 he took on board and articulated Labour Party ideas about collective security at a time when he had become convinced that world conflict was otherwise

2 See W. David McIntyre and W. J. Gardner, *Speeches and Documents in New Zealand History*, Oxford, 1971, pp. 358-61.

3 See J. V. Wilson, 'New Zealand's participation in International Organisations' in T. C. Larkin, ed., *New Zealand's External Relations*, Wellington and London, 1962, p. 70.

4 Carl Berendsen, Unpublished memoirs, manuscript in the possession of the Berendsen family (hereafter Memoirs), Personalities: M. J. Savage.

5 A. McIntosh, 'The Origins of the Department of External Affairs' in F. L. W. Wood, ed., *New Zealand in World Affairs*, I, Wellington, 1977, p. 16.

6 Angus Ross, 'New Zealand and the Commonwealth to 1939', in *The Commonwealth, Past, Present and Future*, papers delivered at a seminar of the Christchurch Branch of the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, NZIIA, Wellington, 1972, p. 7.

inevitable.⁷ Berendsen was the author of the 21-point statement, designed to give the League Covenant some backbone, which New Zealand deposited in Geneva. He responded to the crusading spirit of Labour's policy with a passionate moral fervour fuelled by his own clear and relatively simple ideas of right and wrong.

For seventeen years, Carl Berendsen as Imperial Affairs Officer (1926), Secretary for External Affairs (1928) and Head of the Prime Minister's department (1932-43), was a back-room man and a one-man band formulating and articulating New Zealand policy not just towards Britain, the Empire and Commonwealth, and the League, but also towards Samoa, New Zealand's mandated territory, for the administration of which he was responsible. On the long sea voyages which in those days brought New Zealand prime ministers and their advisers to imperial conferences he provided information to the prime minister of the day and helped to shape his ideas.⁸

In 1944, Berendsen had two tasks. He had to stamp New Zealand's presence on the consciousness of the politicians in Washington unaccustomed to concerning themselves with the views and security requirements of lesser communities sited in strategically unimportant areas of the South Pacific. On the face of it, New Zealand was not potentially of much interest to the United States. His other task was to make New Zealand's presence felt in the new world organization, the United Nations, for which he and the New Zealand Labour Government held great hopes, seeing it as the basis of future world peace and security.⁹ Berendsen relished the challenge. After years of silence and relative obscurity he had a platform at last and a captive and influential audience.

Berendsen arrived in Washington with the confidence engendered by his long experience of making policy and handling politicians, by his wide experience of international meetings and his knowledge of the skills required to operate as an effective delegate at such gatherings, and by his established acquaintance with leading British civil servants and a number of old Geneva hands. Berendsen was not only New Zealand's Minister in Washington — the Legation was raised to an Embassy in 1948 — he was also New Zealand's chief delegate to the United Nations. This unsatisfactory arrangement meant that Berendsen spent a great deal of time in New York while the day-to-day essential and less glamorous political work was carried out by junior officers in Washington. The difficulties were compounded by the fact that, especially in the early years, the Embassy

7 Berendsen, *Memoirs, Personalities: Savage*.

8 See McIntosh, p. 12-17. I am grateful to Professor Angus Ross, Dunedin, for information of his interview with Sir Carl Berendsen. In this Sir Carl mentioned how valuable he found the long voyages on which he and the prime minister of the day would work every morning and discuss the topics they expected to come up at Imperial Conferences.

9 See Fraser's statement on the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference 1944 in *New Zealand Foreign Policy Statements and Documents 1943-1957*, Wellington, 1972 (hereafter cited as *Statements 1943-1957*), p. 71.

staff, and of course the staff of the New Zealand Department of External Affairs as a whole, was small.¹⁰ As was demonstrated by his failure to build up a professional administrative service for Samoa in the period from 1928-1943 when he was responsible for the administration of that territory, and his refusal to lay the ground work and establish the nucleus of a professional department of external affairs in New Zealand before 1943,¹¹ Berendsen was not an organization man. He was himself hard working, tremendously able, extremely well informed in matters of New Zealand policy, vastly more experienced than anyone else in the New Zealand Legation and delegation to the United Nations, and a prima donna. None of this made it simple to work with him.

Berendsen plunged into American life with great enthusiasm. The freedom, easiness and generosity of the United States appealed to him, just as his open, hearty and no-nonsense approach appealed to Americans. 'He was the sort of chap', said one former colleague, 'who didn't require great formality.'¹² All the same he loved being Ambassador, rubbing shoulders with the great, and conscious of the dignity of his office. 'An ambassador', he wrote, 'cannot afford to be made to look ridiculous. He carries the dignity of his country and his monarch with him wherever he goes... I have never allowed myself as an Ambassador to be ignored or directly or indirectly insulted or imposed upon without insisting upon the dignity of the country I had the honour to represent.'¹³ Very often this meant that, though he rated matters of personal comfort highly, an inadequate railway carriage or an uncomfortable bed was represented to the unfortunate menial who had to face the famous Berendsen wrath as an insult to the Crown.¹⁴

Berendsen has variously been described as forceful, pugnacious, dogmatic, aggressive, obsessive, passionate, active, self-confident and voluble.¹⁵ Socially he had a bluff, hearty, hail-fellow-well-met manner and he was soon well-known in the Washington and United Nations scene; but he seems to have had few, if any, friends in the United States, or indeed in New Zealand. If there is a New Zealand personality, passion, emotion and obsession are not usually associated with it.¹⁶ Berendsen was, of course, an Australian who had come to New Zealand with his parents in 1900 at the age of ten. It may be that some of his vitality and showmanship came from these Australian origins. Perhaps they arose simply in response

10 I am indebted to Sir George Laking, Mr. Frank Corner and Mr. Charles Craw, interviewed in Wellington, October 1985, for this information.

11 J. W. Davidson, *Samoa Mo Samoa*, Oxford, 1967, p. 135-58; McIntosh, p. 17.

12 Interview with Sir Guy Powles, Wellington, 7 October 1985.

13 Berendsen, *Memoirs*, Book III 1944-1952, Chapter xvi.

14 e.g. *ibid.*

15 Prime Minister's Press Statement, 13 December 1973; interviews with Mr. Frank Corner, Wellington; Mr. Tom Larkin, Wellington; Mr. Charles Craw, Wellington; Mr. Jim Weir, Wellington; Professor Angus Ross, Dunedin.

16 See Gordon McLauchlan, *The Passionless People*, Auckland, 1976.

to the difficulties and uncertainties of a childhood that was peripatetic and always financially insecure.¹⁷

Rather surprisingly, working with Berendsen seems to have been, if not fun, at least not unpleasantly exciting. Sir Guy Powles said: 'He was comparatively easy to work for as long as you got over the initial fright and distress at being up against such a powerful personality.' Powles said that it was always stimulating to have an interview with Berendsen no matter what the subject.¹⁸ His rages were certainly stimulating, terrible to behold and to endure. His remorse, if he found or felt himself to be in the wrong, was apparently equally dreadful and even harder to bear. He had a huge rasping voice which boomed around the New Zealand office and everyone knew when a speech or despatch was being dictated. Unfortunate secretaries charged with the task of taking down the cascade of words were frequently reduced to tears. Absolute punctuality was demanded of all staff, and political officers obtained perforce a rigorous training in the rapid production of lucid reports — the account of the three-month-long deliberations of the General Assembly had, for instance, to be produced within three days.¹⁹

Nevertheless Berendsen's staff seems to have enjoyed the sense of being in contact with a rather special personality and, in spite of the tribulations, to have appreciated the basic integrity of the man. They knew that Berendsen was convinced that what he was doing was right and would not do anything he thought was not right, so to that extent he was predictable, even if one did not agree with his concept of right and wrong. Berendsen was an extremely decisive man who could not bear shilly-shallying. He believed things were black or white and he reputedly said: 'If you look at a thing and it's 51% black and 49% white then for Christ's sake, it's black.'²⁰ His views on some other matters were equally primitive. He said he would stand up for his staff right or wrong, and he did so, winning thereby loyalty which might not have been inspired by his otherwise bullying behaviour.²¹ He seems to have feared no man and dressed down visiting New Zealand politicians who did not meet his standards with as much facility as he did the staff of the Embassy.

He could also be very funny and had a great comic command of language. He was, of course, an actor although it is also true to say that, throughout his Washington years, he played to the hilt only one character part.

Berendsen liked to speak impromptu, composing with great fluency as

17 I am indebted to Mr. Tom Larkin, Wellington, for information about Sir Carl's childhood and education.

18 Interview with Sir Guy Powles, Wellington, 7 October 1985.

19 Interviews with Sir Guy Powles, Mr. Charles Craw, Mr. Jim Weir, Wellington, October 1985.

20 Both Mr. Frank Corner and Mr. Charles Craw, who worked with Sir Carl Berendsen in Washington and New York respectively, related this Berendsen maxim.

21 Both Sir Guy Powles and Mr. Charles Craw related episodes in which Sir Carl's trust in, and support of, his staff were demonstrated.

he went, and he prepared his own set pieces, shutting himself up to think about them and emerging to dictate the entire speech. At best his speeches and despatches were masterpieces of magisterial prose which seemed to owe something to Gibbon, Macaulay and Burke; at worst, particularly in his later years in Washington, his style was so florid as to be embarrassing. Huge episodic sentences full of brackets, dashes, parentheses and semicolons went on for nearly a page. Here is an example from 1950. His subject is the plague of communism:

Wherever there are cranks, and they exist in considerable numbers in every part of the globe; wherever there are malcontents; wherever there are those, and they are legion, whose abilities cannot keep pace with their ambitions; wherever there are those, and they are everywhere, who believe their comparative failure in the world to have been due to the evil machinations of their private enemies; wherever there are those who are small but think they should be big, who are ignored and think they should be dominant, who are poor and think they should be rich, who hate and who yearn for the opportunity to injure, wherever there are those who envy or who suffer, either justly or unjustly, then these damnable heresies of 'communism' make their appeal.²²

Berendsen had genuine oratorical skills and he learned all the tricks of effective delivery. At his best he was compared with Churchill; at his worst, after an anti-communist diatribe, he was likened to something out of Radio City Music Hall.²³ In 1945 at the San Francisco conference Sir Alexander Cadogan, Under-Secretary for State at the Foreign Office, noted in his diary of the Committee on Enforcement Arrangements on which he was sitting: 'the discussion dragged on, and eventually Berendsen, the New Zealander, chose to get up and make the regular sort of demagogic speech which he delights in. I lost my temper and went for him, which I enjoyed. He doesn't mind: I like him and we are very good friends!'²⁴ On this occasion New Zealand was trying so to alter Chapter I of the Charter as to include among the purposes of the United Nations: 'to preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and political independence of every member of the organisation'; a view of collective security in which every member would be bound to come to the aid of every other member.²⁵ Berendsen seems to have spoken for forty minutes on this amendment which of course represented one of New Zealand's efforts to get teeth into the new system of collective security and was therefore central in Berendsen's vision for the post-war world. His final peroration included reference to the graves of 'thousands upon thousands of New Zealanders throughout the world...undying evidence that New

22 Robin Kay, ed., *Documents on New Zealand External Relations Volume III: The ANZUS Pact and the Treaty of Peace with Japan*, Wellington, 1985 (hereafter cited as Documents NZEA III), No. 198, p. 525.

23 *New Zealand Herald*, 8 September 1951; Interview with Mr. Charles Craw, Wellington, 8 October, 1985.

24 David Dilks, ed., *Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan 1938-1945*, London, 1971, p. 744.

25 Bruce Brown, *New Zealand Foreign Policy in Retrospect*, Wellington, 1970, p. 6.

Zealand did not restrict her advocacy of the principles of peace, order and justice to mere words'.²⁶ One can feel a certain sympathy for Sir Alexander Cadogan.

Berendsen's speeches and despatches at their most elegant and forceful are all the more remarkable in that he was apparently not a deeply read man. He was never observed reading more than an occasional detective novel and a book on his obsession, baseball. This he read ostentatiously at the U.N. when he wished to bait the Russians. The book had a very bright cover and the title in large letters proclaimed *Balls Hits and Errors*. There were no books on the shelves of the library at the residence.²⁷ It seems, therefore, that Berendsen drew on the probably sound but certainly unremarkable education he had received in rural New Zealand and at Victoria University College in Wellington. He had a real, and apparently instinctive, feel for language. Berendsen never read background papers and never read U.N. documents, maintaining that these could tell him nothing he had not learned from *The New York Times*, which he did read thoroughly including the sports pages from which he may have obtained some of his racier images. He liked, in fact, to make sure he had one striking phrase in a speech so that it would be reported in *The New York Times*.²⁸

Berendsen had written the papers and formulated policy for years before he came to Washington, was very familiar with the ideas and attitudes of Peter Fraser, Prime Minister from 1940 to 1949, and had a close relationship with Alister McIntosh who became head of the newly formed Department of External Affairs when Berendsen left for Canberra in 1943.²⁹ Berendsen was not interested in theories of foreign affairs: his ideas about international relations were simple, clear-cut, and firmly established by the time he reached the United States.

In his early years in Washington he reflected New Zealand policy very well and his telegrams tended to assume Wellington would agree with his observations.³⁰ As the time since he had been in Wellington increased, and as a new breed of better-educated idealistic young professionals began to be recruited into the Department of External Affairs, Berendsen's instinctive reactions were less and less those of Wellington, to which he became increasingly hostile.

In 1948 when back in Wellington for consultations Berendsen spoke to members of the Department of External Affairs, warning them, in one

²⁶ *The United Nations Conference on International Organisation: Report on the Conference held at San Francisco 25 April — 26 June 1945 by the Right Honourable Mr. Peter Fraser, Chairman of the Delegation*, Department of External Affairs Wellington, 1945, pamphlet No. 11, p. 25.

²⁷ Information provided by Mr. Tom Larkin and Mr. Frank Corner, Wellington.

²⁸ Information provided by Mr. Jim Weir, Wellington, 8 October 1985.

²⁹ McIntosh, p. 18.

³⁰ Interviews with Mr Frank Corner and Mr Jim Weir, Wellington, October 1985. Mr Weir said, 'Sir Carl told Wellington'.

of his favourite phrases, that the world was faced with a choice between the secret ballot and the secret police. The tone of the questions which followed led Berendsen to accuse McIntosh of recruiting a bunch of communists. Latterly he had a list of 66 complaints about Wellington over which he would brood and he carried in his top pocket an envelope which he was wont to produce with a flourish, claiming that it contained his key card, his resignation.³¹

In Washington and New York Berendsen concentrated on what he saw as essentials: questions of political importance designed to make the United Nations do its job and keep the peace. He was not interested in questions of technical and capital assistance to the underdeveloped world and, as he disliked Bill Sutch, New Zealand's representative on the Economic and Social Council, who was stationed in New York, he seldom, if ever, went into the New Zealand office in New York.³²

It was to be expected, given the pre-war experience, that Berendsen should, with Fraser, be determined to avoid for the U.N. the weaknesses they had detected in the League. They saw the failure of the League as a moral failure on the part of individual members who had chosen the rule of expediency over that of moral principles.³³ Berendsen and Fraser were consequently critical of the 1944 Dumbarton Oaks proposals for a United Nations Organisation on the grounds that no definite pledges were required of members to protect one another against external aggression, and on the grounds that the small powers were to have an inadequate voice.³⁴

In April 1945 Berendsen accompanied Fraser to London to a Commonwealth Conference to discuss the Dumbarton Oaks proposals before the San Francisco Conference which was to be held in May. There New Zealand found itself, with Australia, in a fruitless fight against the Great Power veto. Berendsen wrote: 'We found ourselves being treated with that kind of friendly and patronising tolerance which adults extend to the fractious child. We were told, not of course in so many words, for that might be interpreted as impolite, that we were unrealistic, that we were not facing the facts of international life...we were urged, in the nicest possible and most indirect ways, to be good children and not to rock the boat.'³⁵ Apart from other considerations there is, implicit here, a certain attitude to British civil servants.

In spite of the warning, Fraser, 'that tiresome old New Zealand P.M.', as Cadogan described him,³⁶ did, in collaboration with Evatt, try to rock the boat and remove the veto — and failed.

The speech which Fraser made reads beautifully and bears all the

31 Interview with Mr. Tom Larkin, Wellington, 7 October 1985.

32 Interview with Mr. Charles Craw, 8 October 1985.

33 Statements 1943-1957, p. 85.

34 *ibid.*

35 Berendsen, *Memoirs*, Book III, Chapter i.

36 Dilks, p. 743.

hallmarks of the Berendsen style. For example: 'I am speaking for a country which, though small in area and population, has made great sacrifices in two world wars. I speak for the New Zealanders who have died and are buried thousands of miles from their own land in the cause they believed to be just. I speak for the millions of New Zealanders yet to be born.'³⁷ It is a pity to have to report that Fraser dropped and scattered the pages of this speech and Berendsen had the 'exquisitely painful' experience of witnessing Fraser, who was almost blind, peering short-sightedly at the pages which he scrambled together and proceeded to read in random order.³⁸

It is said that after the San Francisco Conference Berendsen took a vow never to make a speech in which he did not mention the veto. He certainly found plenty of opportunities. Everyone in the office became very familiar with what they called his 'veto speech' which was made up and down the United States.³⁹ On one memorable occasion he even managed to work the veto into a speech proposing the toast at the marriage of a New Zealand Legation staff member to an American.⁴⁰

In 1946 he reminded the General Assembly:

The marriage of the veto to the Charter was a shotgun wedding. If this matter had been left to the free and untrammelled vote of the delegates to that conference, it would unquestionably have been defeated, and I venture to add that, were this matter put to the vote of men and women in the street throughout the world, then indeed the veto would be blown away in a gale of indignant repudiation... It is in essence an application of the false and pagan principle that might is right. It is a negation in the international field of those principles of equitable democracy which are so dear to such a large section of mankind...⁴¹

The message changed little over the years. New Zealand's demand, said Berendsen, was a modest one: 'we ask no veto. We ask no predominant or decisive voice. We ask for our proportionate voice in those Councils which will influence the affairs of man as far ahead as we can see — our proportionate voice, no more and no less.'⁴²

Berendsen never doubted New Zealand's right to have its proportionate voice heard and his confidence harks back as much to the New Zealanders' view of themselves as co-decision makers on the board of the British Empire and Commonwealth, as to the New Zealand experience of the League.

The essence of the 21-point programme with which New Zealand and Berendsen had sought to reform the League Covenant was that the League should stand by its doctrines and be prepared to back them with force.

37 Statements 1943-1957, p. 86.

38 Berendsen, *Memoirs, Personalities*: P. Fraser.

39 Interview with Sir Guy Powles.

40 This story was related by everyone interviewed.

41 *The United Nations: Report of the New Zealand delegation on the second part of the first regular session of the General Assembly at New York, 23 October — 15 December 1946*, Department of External Affairs, Wellington 1947, pamphlet No. 33, p. 94.

42 *ibid.*, p. 93.

After 1945 it was Berendsen's constant theme that the United Nations should show more backbone. By 1947 disillusionment was beginning to set in as it did not.⁴³ He blamed the use of the veto in the Security Council for the ineffectiveness of the system.⁴⁴ Berendsen was of course delighted when the United Nations intervened in Korea. He rang a colleague at the Embassy shouting in reference to Truman, 'The little man's done it!'⁴⁵ and, as Dean Rusk recalled, went straight to the State Department saying 'What can we do to help?'⁴⁶ Predictably he regarded the armistice, made when in his opinion the Chinese forces were on the point of being defeated, as wrong, and he also thought it was wrong to refrain from bombing Chinese bases beyond the Yalu. It seemed to him that appeasers among the Allies were 'hanging on to American "coat-tails" and holding the United States back'.⁴⁷

The straightforward propositions that governed Berendsen's view of the world — that might is not right, that one must accept the consequences of one's actions — infused his speeches with powerful moral fervour. This is best illustrated in what some regard as his best speech, made in 1948 on the question of the partition of Palestine. In 1947 Berendsen had argued for New Zealand that the United Nations must be prepared to back up its plan for partition of Palestine with some enforcing organization. The proposals put to the Assembly did not contain such provisions and New Zealand first abstained on the vote in committee but finally was persuaded to support the partition.⁴⁸ In 1948 when the U.N. Assembly attempted to grapple with the situation following partition the United States, formerly a leading supporter of partition, put forward a plan for the administration of Palestine as a trust territory. This brought forth a passionate speech from Berendsen, who had not only disliked the partition proposal but had no time for 'weathervanes'. In a speech which effectively killed the American trusteeship idea he said:

The New Zealand Government believed then that partition was the best solution and it believes the same thing today. It is our view that the Assembly decided to do the right thing the wrong way, and I am not expressing that view now with all the advantages of hindsight. . . . Up to the very last moment I asked whether the Assembly was prepared to gamble with the lives of innocent people in Palestine. The appeal fell on deaf ears. You were prepared to so gamble; we did gamble, and we lost. But we do not pay. You know today who is paying. The gambler's loss is being paid by the people of Palestine; it is being paid in part by British boys dying at their post of duty, but for a much greater part it is being paid,

43 *The United Nations: Report of the New Zealand delegation on the second regular session of the General Assembly held at New York, 16 September — 29 November 1947*, Department of External Affairs, Wellington, 1948, pamphlet No. 60, p. 147.

44 *ibid.*, p. 149.

45 Interview with Mr. Frank Corner, Wellington, 3 October 1985.

46 Information provided by Mr. Jim Weir, Wellington, 8 October 1985.

47 Berendsen, *Memoirs*, Book III, Chapter xiii.

48 Brown, p. 7.

and will continue to be paid, by the people of Palestine, be they innocent or guilty, be they Arab or Jew...⁴⁹

In the United Nations Berendsen concentrated his efforts in the First Committee which considered political and security questions although he was sometimes active in the Fourth Committee, the Trusteeship Committee, where New Zealand had a particular interest through its trust territory, Samoa. Berendsen was chairman of this committee in 1947. He was by all accounts an excellent, if idiosyncratic, chairman and meetings directed by him finished in record time. There was general appreciation of his habit of deflecting matters back to the practical when discussions entered or seemed about to enter ideological clouds. He believed common sense was very uncommon indeed in such meetings.⁵⁰ Another area where his talents as a chairman were displayed was in the Far Eastern Commission to which he was appointed New Zealand's chief delegate in 1946. He was chairman of the Steering Committee.⁵¹ He was very active in the first year of the Commission but quickly became frustrated with the United States attitude to the Commission⁵² and with the tactics of the Chairman of the FEC, General McCoy, with whom he had some spectacular brushes.⁵³

Berendsen's ideas about Japan, the Japanese and the Japanese peace treaty were typical of those of New Zealanders of his day. New Zealanders did not have much direct experience of Japanese people but broadly speaking they did not like Asians in general and, like Berendsen, saw in the populous lands to the north a threat to their relatively empty country.⁵⁴ Berendsen thought it was impossible for a westerner to fathom the oriental mind. He believed that the Japanese were warlike people, trained to a tradition of warfare and conquest, who had sought and would seek again to impose their will on the world.⁵⁵ Initially, therefore, he was in favour of a long occupation, harsh peace terms and, predictably, a commitment to the enforcement of such terms. In 1946 he felt twenty years was the minimum time before Japan could be expected to resume her place among peace-loving nations.⁵⁶

49 *The United Nations: Report of the New Zealand delegation on the second special session of the General Assembly held at New York 16 April — 14 May 1948 to consider the future of Palestine*, Department of External Affairs, Wellington, 1948, pamphlet no. 61, p. 39.

50 Sir Cecil Day to A. McIntosh, 24 April 1947, MFA Archives 102/9/1, Wellington. Information provided by Mr. Charles Craw and Mr. Jim Weir.

51 Robin Kay, ed., *Documents on New Zealand External Relations Volume II: The Surrender and Occupation of Japan*, Wellington 1982 (hereafter cited as Documents NZEA II) No. 181, p. 332.

52 Documents NZEA II, Document 200, p. 391.

53 Documents NZEA II, Document 269, p. 617.

54 Berendsen, *Memoirs*, Book III, Chapter v, Chapter xv.

55 Berendsen, *Memoirs*, Chapter v.

56 *Dominion*, 1 March 1946; Memo by New Zealand Representative at the Far Eastern Advisory Commission, 6 November 1945, MFA Archives 268/9/9 Pt. 1.

The policy papers on the Japanese peace settlement came from Wellington and, while Berendsen's attitude about the threat from Japan was shared in the capital, there was general recognition by 1947 that New Zealand was ultimately dependent on American willingness to enforce any treaty with Japan. It was also recognized that it was not worthwhile to insist on including in the treaty provisions the United States was unwilling to implement.⁵⁷ The officials in Wellington saw that difficult choices would have to be made and by 1950 they knew that there was a good chance that the Japanese peace treaty would not advance New Zealand's security requirements.⁵⁸ For them, as for the Australians, it was a question of tactics vis-à-vis the United States. The Washington mission was involved in this discussion only insofar as it responded to instructions.

By 1950, however, Berendsen had reached his most sulphurous anti-communist phase. His disillusionment with the United Nations had grown steadily and he equated what he saw and heard with the 'dark forces' which had operated in Europe in the 1930s. As early as 1947 Berendsen was making virulent anti-communist speeches. At that time Soviet delegates were making speeches in which they denounced and named 'war-mongers'. Berendsen longed to be included in the list, for the company was, as he said, distinguished and included Churchill, Truman and Dulles. 'Who is there indeed,' he said, 'who would not be proud to have his name associated with that group of peace-loving men?'⁵⁹ In spite of his best vituperative efforts, however, the weeks passed and he was ignored. Finally he was denounced as a war-monger. Alas, the accuser was the delegate from Byelorussia. 'Not good enough,' said Berendsen, 'not good enough. War-monger third class!'⁶⁰

By 1950, however, he might well have been declared a first class war-monger. He had become obsessed with the threat of Russian imperialism assisted by international communism, convinced that the world was moving towards a third world war, and conscious that the United Nations, which he felt had become nothing but a 'talking shop' because of the veto, would not solve the world's problems. In an enormously long despatch in his most purple prose he blamed the Soviet Union for this state of affairs: 'a group of international thugs and gangsters' who by a course of 'bluster, bribery, blackmail, chicanery and outright physical violence, torture and murder' were planning to seize Europe.⁶¹

This state of mind altered Berendsen's attitude to Japan and the Japanese peace treaty. He feared that 'if Japan should decide to join this communist conspiracy' the 'prospects in the Pacific would be gloomy indeed'.⁶² He

57 The Enforcement of the peace treaty, memorandum, 27 May 1947; MFA Archives 102/9/38.

58 Colombo Conference (UK Delegation) to F.O., 13 January 1950, FO371/83828, FJ1021/4, Public Record Office, London.

59 *The United Nations*, pamphlet No. 60, p. 21.

60 Interview with Mr. Tom Larkin.

61 Documents NZEA III, Document 198, p. 523.

62 Berendsen, *Memoirs*, Book III, Chapter xv.

became convinced that, on the grounds of equity, fairness and expediency, a generous and friendly peace must be offered Japan. In addition in 1950 he advocated approaching the United States with the suggestion of a limited Pacific Pact, extending over the area for which the United States accepted responsibility for defence, and including Australia and New Zealand, which in return would join the United States in defending the Northern Pacific. Berendsen envisaged a treaty which might include the United Kingdom, Canada and the Philippines as well as Australia, New Zealand and the United States.⁶³ Such a treaty would be designed to stem the communist tide.

A treaty did eventuate in 1951 when Berendsen signed the ANZUS treaty on New Zealand's behalf. He did not claim to have had any real part in the formulation of this treaty⁶⁴ and it seems from the evidence of the Wellington archives that his despatch on this matter was less influential there than in retrospect one might expect.⁶⁵ Perhaps this was in part because the despatch was so extraordinarily long. Berendsen's views had by this time become so extreme as frequently to be embarrassing.

Berendsen's last assignment of importance as Ambassador in Washington was the signing, on New Zealand's behalf, of the ANZUS treaty and the Japanese peace treaty at San Francisco in September 1951. It is often the fate of small countries and their representatives to be used by their more powerful allies. Berendsen had been an ally of the United States in the past and was again at the last. Dean Rusk, then Assistant Secretary of State, asked Berendsen to propose the adoption of the rules of procedure in order to forestall any attempt by the Russians to sabotage the proceedings in the absence of any accepted rules. The plan was put into action and Berendsen found himself brushing shoulders with Gromyko as he moved towards the platform. He wrote afterwards: 'I brushed better than he did, and I got there first without actually running or hurrying'.⁶⁶ To Berendsen's considerable pleasure, Russian obstruction had been thwarted.

Berendsen's speech at San Francisco was one of the most highly publicized and approved of the hundreds he had made. Conscious as he was by now of the power of radio and television, he chose his time to speak at San Francisco with regard to Eastern Time, so that he obtained maximum coverage, and he records with satisfaction that over twenty million people saw him on television and another thirty million heard him on radio.⁶⁷

63 Documents NZEA III, Document 198, p. 533.

64 Interview with Sir Carl Berendsen, 10 September 1964, John Foster Dulles oral history project, Mudd Library, Princeton University.

65 The Minister of External Affairs, Frederick Doidge, did not reply until 9 May 1950, two months later. See *Documents NZEA III*, Document 200, p. 545-6. The department's comment on the despatch is dated 9 February 1952, almost a year later. See Summary of Sir Carl Berendsen's proposal for an alliance with the United States (9 February 1952), MFA Archives 102/9/46.

66 Berendsen, *Memoirs*, Book III, Chapter xv.

67 *ibid.*

Berendsen himself did not feel his speech was particularly notable in part, one suspects, because this was one of the rare occasions when he had had some assistance in writing it.⁶⁸ The style is magisterial Berendsen. His tone to Japan is forgiving. 'We have no desire,' he said, 'to hold Japan in bondage nor to reduce a proud, energetic and capable people to a status of inferiority.'⁶⁹

Acknowledging the risk in a treaty which left Japan the power to rearm he accepted responsibility for New Zealand in typical fashion: '...if it is a risk it is a risk that we in New Zealand have taken with our eyes open as an earnest of the intention of our small country to play its part as a good neighbour in the Pacific. The onus is on Japan to fulfill this trust as we hope and believe Japan will fulfill it.'⁷⁰

His best shots were, as always, saved for the Russians who, he claimed, had come to San Francisco 'to do mischief' — a phrase picked up, no doubt to Berendsen's satisfaction, by the *San Francisco Examiner* in a flattering account of the performance of New Zealand's 'skilled and personable ambassador'.⁷¹

Berendsen's term in Washington ended on 30 January 1952. He had arrived nine years earlier when New Zealand's policy was in a state of flux. He left, having set the seal on a new era in New Zealand's foreign relationships. In his speech at San Francisco Berendsen made frequent reference to New Zealand as a Pacific nation⁷² and, in retrospect at least, the Japanese peace treaty and ANZUS seem to mark the dawn of Pacific consciousness in New Zealand. Certainly they acknowledge publicly that the United States rather than the United Kingdom must be the focus for New Zealand's security. With ANZUS, in fact, New Zealand had joined a new team.

Berendsen's task had been to stamp New Zealand's presence and views on the consciousness of American politicians and officials. In this he had succeeded admirably. If, in the end, his flamboyance and obsessions came to embarrass his younger, better informed, and more cautious colleagues, he had, in fact, served his country well. There is no doubt that the New Zealand Foreign Service will not see his like again.

ANN TROTTER

University of Otago

68 *ibid.*, and interview with Mr. Frank Corner.

69 Documents NZEA III, Document 434, p. 1164.

70 *ibid.*, p. 1165.

71 *San Francisco Examiner*, 15 September 1951, quoted in Documents NZEA III, p. 1168.

72 Documents NZEA III, Document 434, pp. 1164, 1166.