



# timeline

1945

World War II ends

The Cold War and the golden age of espionage begin. Department of External Affairs information is being leaked to Moscow.

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1949

Prime Minister Chifley sets up Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO)  
Election of new Coalition Government led by Robert Menzies

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1950

**April** High Court rejects *Communist Party Dissolution Bill*

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1951

**February 5** Petrovs arrive in Australia to work at the Soviet Embassy in Canberra

**July 7** Petrov meets part-time ASIO agent Dr Michael Bialoguskii

**September** Referendum: *Powers to Deal with Communists and Communism* defeated

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1953

**November 20** Soviet Embassy dismisses Mrs Petrov from her position as embassy accountant, confirming for the Petrovs that they are out of favour

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1954

**January** Soviet Union recalls Petrov permanently

**April 3** Vladimir Petrov defects, two days before the Petrovs must depart for Moscow

**April 13** Prime Minister Menzies announces Petrov's defection in Parliament

**April 14** Labor supports Menzies' Royal Commission into espionage

**April 20** Evdokia Petrov decides to defect and join her husband

**May 17** *Royal Commission on Espionage* commences

**May 29** Coalition wins close election

**August 16** Evatt appears at the Royal Commission to defend his staff and prove his conspiracy theory

**September 7** Commissioners withdraw Evatt's leave to appear at the *Royal Commission on Espionage*

**September 14** Royal Commission report is released. No charges were laid.

**October 5** Labor splits after Evatt charges anti-communists in the party with conspiracy

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1955

**August** Royal Commission report published

**October 19** Evatt announces to a shocked Parliament that he has written asking Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov if the Petrov documents were forgeries

**October 20** Menzies calls an election

**December 10** Sweeping election victory for Menzies when the Labor Party (Anti-Communist) directs its second preferences against Labor

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1960

**February 10** Evatt leaves politics to head the Supreme Court of NSW

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1966

**January 26** Menzies retires undefeated

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1974

**September** Public learns of Petrovs' new identity and address

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1989

**November** The Berlin Wall falls symbolising the end of the Cold War

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1991

**July** Petrov dies aged 84. Evdokia outlives him by 11 years.

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# Key players

## Soviet Agent

### Vladimir Petrov

Soviet agent Vladimir Petrov carried out espionage activities from February 1951 using his position as Third Secretary at the Soviet Embassy in Canberra as a cover. He soon met Polish doctor, and part-time ASIO agent, Michael Bialoguski—a key player in Petrov's defection. Not suspecting Bialoguski's ASIO connection Petrov disclosed to him his difficulties at the Soviet Embassy. Bialoguski in turn alerted ASIO to the possibility that Petrov might defect.

Petrov had received unfavourable Embassy reports, failed to develop a spy network in Australia and was aligned with the deposed Russian security chief, Beria. He would not have expected a happy return to Russia and came to see defection as his only option. He defected on 3 April 1954 bringing with him documents and information that helped the West to destabilise the Soviet Union's worldwide intelligence network.

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## Prime Minister

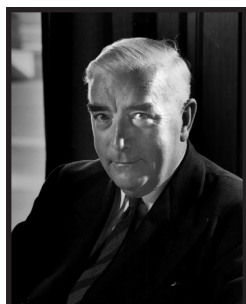
### Robert Gordon Menzies

Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced the defection of Petrov and established the Royal Commission into Espionage. He rejected Dr Evatt's conspiracy theory.

Menzies gave up a career as one of Melbourne's leading lawyers, to become Australia's most successful politician. He entered the Victorian Legislative Council in 1928 and moved to the Legislative Assembly in 1929. He was a minister in the conservative Victorian government from 1932 to 1934.

Menzies served as Attorney-General in the federal United Australia Party Government of Joseph Lyons from 1934 to 1939. Following the death of Lyons in 1939 Menzies served as Prime Minister until 1941, when he resigned. He founded the Liberal Party of Australia in 1944 and became our longest serving Prime Minister during his second term, from 19 December 1949 until his resignation on 26 January 1966.

Max Dupain & Associates



## Opposition Leader

### Dr Herbert Vere Evatt

Doc Evatt and Robert Menzies had similar backgrounds. Both were educated on scholarships. Both became very successful lawyers but, unlike Menzies, Evatt didn't give up the law completely for politics.

After a term in the NSW Legislative Assembly (1925-1930), Evatt went to the High Court as its youngest ever judge. He entered Federal politics in 1940, becoming Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs a year later. From June 1951 to February 1960, he led the Federal Labor Party, then returned to the law as Chief Justice of the NSW Supreme Court

Dr Evatt was convinced that the Petrov Affair was a conspiracy to prevent him and Labor winning the 1954 election. Defending his conspiracy theory before the Royal Commission greatly undermined his authority and reputation, leading to the Split of the Labor Party in 1955. Labor did not win government again until 1972.

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