

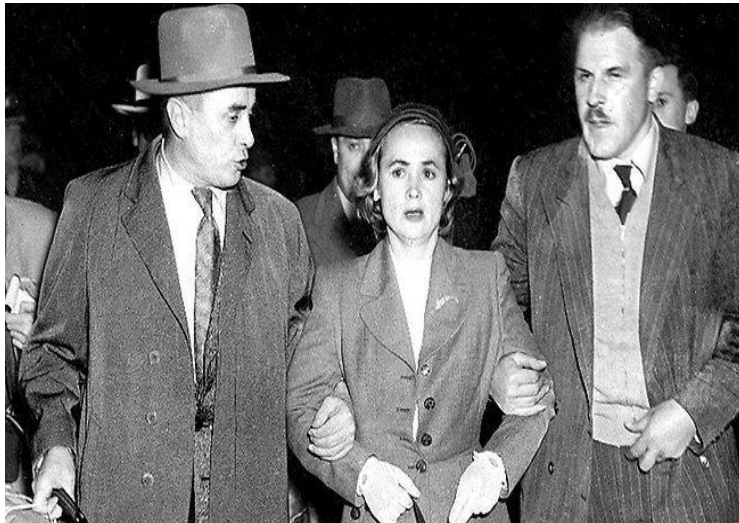
1954: Was it the Petrov Election?

Wednesday 7 March 2018 4:15-5:30pm

School of History Seminar Series

Speaker: Dr Bridget Brooklyn, Western Sydney University

MacDonald Room: Menzies Library, ANU



The Australian federal election, held on 29 May, 1954, is often referred to as the 'Petrov' election because of the tumultuous circumstances surrounding it. On 13 April—just as Parliament was to rise for the election campaign—the prime minister, Robert Menzies, announced that the Third Secretary at the Soviet Embassy, Vladimir Petrov, had defected. The Liberal-Country Party coalition went on to win that

election, but not principally because of the Cold War curtain-raiser with which it is so often linked. In this paper, I will argue that the greatest significance in the return of the coalition is less to do with the Cold War than the recent World War. As Australians emerged from the anxieties and privations of the war and postwar years, the election result is a reminder of one of the things that Australian voters prize about their governments: the promise of stability in the midst of high drama.



Bridget Brooklyn is a lecturer in Australian history in the History and Political Thought discipline of the School of Humanities and Communication Arts, Western Sydney University. Her research interests are Australian history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including Australian imperial loyalty, eugenics and feminism. A forthcoming article, 'Claiming Anzac' (*Melbourne Historical Journal* 45, no.1) discusses the role of conservative political activist, Dr Mary Booth, in the development of Sydney's Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park.