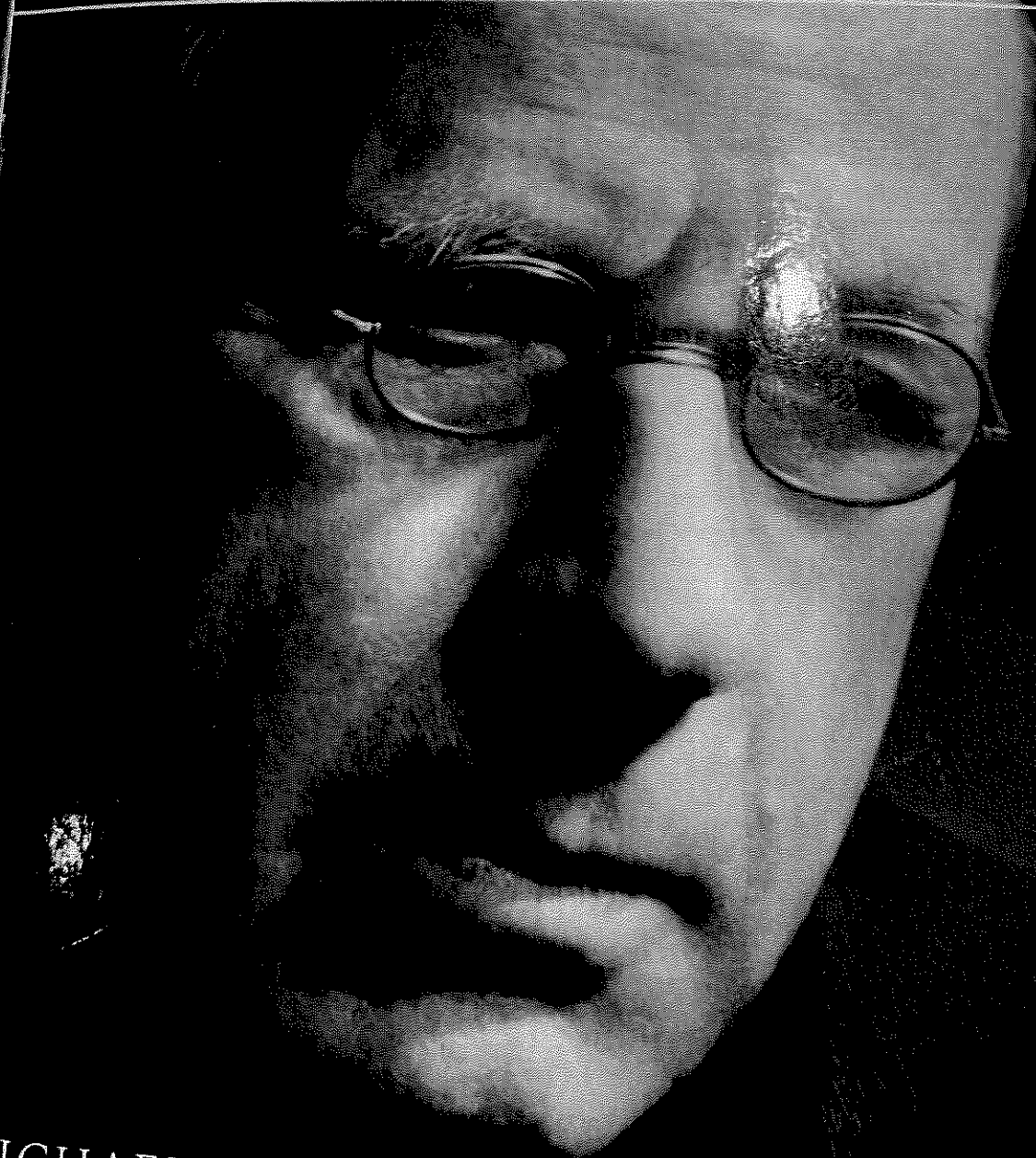


Bassett & King, 2000

1945

# TOMORROW COMES THE SONG

A LIFE OF PETER FRASER



MICHAEL BASSETT & MICHAEL KING

PENGUIN BOOKS  
Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd, cnr Airborne and Rosedale Roads, Albany, Auckland 1310, New Zealand  
Penguin Books Ltd, 27 Wrights Lane, London W8 5TZ, England  
Penguin Putnam Inc, 375 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10014, United States  
Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 487 Maroondah Highway, Ringwood, Australia 3134  
Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 10 Alcorn Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4V 3B2  
Penguin Books (South Africa) Pty Ltd, 5 Watkins Street, Denver Ext 4, 2094, South Africa  
Penguin Books India (P) Ltd, 11, Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi 110 017, India  
Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England

First published by Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd, 2000

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Copyright © Michael Bassett and Michael King 2000

The right of Michael Bassett and Michael King to be identified as the  
authors of this work in terms of section 96 of the Copyright Act 1994 is hereby asserted.

Designed by Mary Egan

Typeset by Egan-Reid Ltd

Printed in Australia by Australian Print Group, Maryborough

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above,  
no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced  
into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means  
(electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without  
the prior written permission of both the copyright owners and  
the above publisher of this book.

ISBN 0 14 029793 6

[www.penguin.com](http://www.penguin.com)

The publishers wish to thank the Historical Branch of the  
Department of Internal Affairs for a grant towards publication of this book.

 creative  
nz

Gratitude of Creative New Zealand towards the production of this book  
acknowledged by the Publishers

siding too enthusiastically with the reactionary and recently defeated conservative elements in Italy. To do so would probably encourage, rather than dissuade, communist forces, which must be checked.<sup>55</sup> It was a heartfelt message from an old social democrat with a lifetime behind him of fighting communists; sadly, it was not one the Americans were in a hurry to hear.

Details about Fraser's efforts in San Francisco were well received at home. On 6 July 1945, when, at Whenuapai, he stepped off the large silver RAF Transport Command plane that had crossed the Pacific in a fast 24 hours, airport workers cheered him. As he entered Auckland Town Hall that night there were cries of 'Good old Peter', and vociferous applause when he stood to speak.<sup>56</sup> Fraser would never enjoy the emotional warmth the public had extended to Savage, but he was becoming a reassuring institution in New Zealanders' lives.

The conflict in Europe had concluded while Fraser was away, and it was only a few weeks before Japan would surrender. This brought to a close a war in which 205,000 New Zealanders had served, 11,625 of them losing their lives. It had cost £640 million.<sup>57</sup> But there was much uncertainty in the air: the great powers were beginning to squabble amongst themselves; Roosevelt was dead; Curtin died the day before Fraser got home; Churchill was heading for defeat in a political earthquake that brought Attlee's Labour Party to power on 26 July; and weapons of mass destruction were being tested that would alter international conduct in the years to come. Fraser offered stability in an uncertain world, and over the next few weeks crowds flocked to hear him talk about the conference and his assessment of future prospects. Support for his efforts was bipartisan. The conservative mayor of Auckland, John Allum, praised his achievements in San Francisco, while the *Auckland Star* commended his 'earnestness' and claimed that his negotiating abilities had 'gained for him a prominence quite disproportionate to the size of the country he represented'.<sup>58</sup> The *Otago Daily Times* applauded his 'shrewdness and dignity'.<sup>59</sup> The Chief Justice, Sir Michael Myers, spoke so warmly of the Prime Minister that a few conservative diehards complained he was meddling in politics. Myers' own efforts to secure the new International Court of Justice, with compulsory jurisdiction over all disputes of a legal or justiciable character, failed to win Great Power support. But he believed Fraser to have been 'a real force' at the conference: 'Every New Zealander whatever his political opinions would be gratified to know that wherever one went in conference circles one found the Prime Minister held in the highest esteem.'<sup>60</sup>

San Francisco was the apogee of Fraser's career. It led one diplomatic historian to observe many years later that Fraser was the only New Zealand leader 'with a plausible claim to be recognised as an international statesman'.<sup>61</sup> The fact that Fraser had played a key part in such a momentous conference won recognition at a testimonial function in Wellington Town Hall on 10 July 1945. Walsh formed a small committee of union and political friends who prepared and delivered a simply worded eulogy to shops and offices, inviting signatures. He then

TOMORROW COMES THE  
THE STATESMAN A  
Anglican and Catholi  
Church and the ch  
noted Fraser's 'out  
delegation 'with dis  
effort to secure ju  
impressive. We are  
have won for our  
were appended. a  
performance and fo  
speeches and fol  
Fraser never  
of praise. As  
Oaks Proposa  
some,' he tol  
on 24 July 19  
Freyberg's s  
television, t  
representat  
conference  
Mr Fraser  
have bee  
Francisc  
Fraser  
colleag  
It was  
affair  
with  
to p  
mor  
Sub  
re  
w

THE  
Ang  
Chi  
no  
de  
e

Catholic bishops of Wellington, the moderator of the Presbyterian the chairman of the Wellington District Methodists, the testimonial to Fraser's 'outstanding . . . statesmanship' as he led the New Zealand with distinction to yourself and our country. You never faltered in the secure justice for all Nations. Your wisdom was clear, steady and We are proud of your service as the Leader of New Zealand. . . . You for our country the esteem of the World.' Several thousand signatures and a short film covering the conference were interspersed with es and followed by an address from the man himself. Fraser never craved personal publicity, nor did he feel comfortable about hymns and praise. As he saw it, he had simply done his best to improve the Dumbarton Proposals. 'We failed in many of our major efforts, but we succeeded in the end,' he told Parliament when the Charter of the United Nations was debated on 24 July 1945.<sup>63</sup> Some believed him too modest. Geoffrey Cox, who served on Heyberg's staff in Greece, Crete and Italy before a substantial career in British television, thought Fraser and Trygve Lie of Norway the outstanding small-power representatives in San Francisco.<sup>64</sup> An unnamed American watching Fraser at the conference observed to a *Weekly News* reporter several years later that 'if your Mr Fraser had had as good a publicity machine as some of the others, he would have been shown, correctly, as perhaps the most outstanding statesman at San Francisco'.<sup>65</sup>

Fraser alone determined Labour's foreign policy, rarely consulting his colleagues. He often failed to inform the Cabinet of major decisions he had made. It was a practice that led one foreign diplomat to describe New Zealand's foreign affairs as akin to a dictatorship.<sup>66</sup> However, domestic matters could not be dealt with so easily. In the spring of 1945 Labour was facing a countrywide conversion to peace after six years of war. Some manpower controls were lifted in June, then more in September 1945. The War Cabinet met for the last time on 9 August 1945, Sullivan calling it 'a political miracle' that it had worked so well. Most members regretted the inevitable return to partisanship.<sup>67</sup> By this time the National Party was campaigning hard with the 1946 election in its sights. It appointed several paid organisers; the *Standard* grizzled that Labour's opponents seemed to possess 'unlimited funds'.<sup>68</sup>

Fraser was indisposed for a couple of days in San Francisco and confined to his room with an infected leg. On his return home he took ill again, and was away from his office for several days. He then developed another carbuncle in October 1945, from which he recovered only slowly.<sup>69</sup> However, the pressure was on as ministers constantly sought to involve him in issues relating to the gradual reconversion of the economy to peacetime. Fortunately the shortage of shipping meant New Zealand's troops were returning only slowly from abroad. This facilitated their steady reabsorption into the economy.<sup>70</sup>