



Kim Richard Nossal, “No Repercussions Down Under”? Australian Responses to *Kristallnacht*,” in *Violence, Memory, and History: Western Perceptions of Kristallnacht*, eds. Colin McCullough and Nathan Wilson (London: Routledge, 2015), 130–50 (page turns indicated thus: [131])\*

## Introduction

In his wide-ranging 1981 study of Jewish emigration from Germany in the 1930s, Herbert A. Strauss concludes that “the November *Kristallnacht* had no repercussions ‘down under.’” Rather, he asserts, “Australia, secure in its global distance from the cosmopolitan culture that created and sustained it, failed in 1938 to follow the motherland in yielding to liberal impulses.”<sup>1</sup> Strauss was led to such a conclusion by comparing the movements of German Jews to different countries in the 1930s. In fact, a more careful examination of Australian policy and politics reveals that precisely the opposite is true: *Kristallnacht* had an important impact on Australian politics. For example, Michael Blakeney shows that *Kristallnacht* weakened support in Australia for a policy of appeasement, and precipitated a national debate on refugees that resulted in a change of policy.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Paul R. Bartrop, the foremost student of Australia and the Holocaust, has convincingly argued that *Kristallnacht* was a “watershed” in the Australian approach to the pressing problem of Jewish refugees seeking to flee persecution in Germany.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to survey those responses to *Kristallnacht*, and show what repercussions the violence unleashed across the Reich on the night of 9–10 November had on Australia and Australians. It proceeds in three parts. First, it looks at how the violence in Germany was portrayed to Australians. It then looks at the response of the Australian public to

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert A. Strauss, “Jewish Emigration from Germany: Nazi Policies and Jewish Responses (II),” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 26:1 (1981), 343–409.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Blakeney, *Australia and the Jewish Refugees, 1933-1948* (Sydney: Croom Helm Australia, 1985), 160.

<sup>3</sup> Paul R. Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust* (Kew, Vic: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1994), 96.

*Kristallnacht*, and what impact public opinion had on the evolution of Australian government policy. The final section seeks to explain how we might best understand these responses.

### **The Pogrom Portrayed**

The most common way Australians learned about *Kristallnacht* was through print media. Needless to say, Australians also received “news” from overseas by other means: news bulletins broadcast by radio stations; backgrounders prepared by the national news service of the Australian Broadcasting [131] Commission; newsreels shown in cinemas; and of course personal letters. But for the period from early November until mid-December 1938 the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Argus* and the *Age* in Melbourne, the *Mercury* in Hobart, the *Advertiser* in Adelaide, the *West Australian* in Perth, and the *Courier-Mail* in Brisbane all kept their audiences informed regarding *Kristallnacht*. In addition, because rural Australians also got their international, national and local news from local newspapers, this chapter examines two regional papers from country New South Wales—the thrice-weekly *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, and the weekly *Goulburn Evening Penny Post*—and a weekly from the Albury-Wodonga region on the New South Wales-Victoria border, the *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*.

I acknowledge that this list is not exhaustive. For example, I do not examine the vibrant tabloid press in Sydney or Melbourne. Nor do I look at the considerable trade union print media, such as the *Australian Worker*, the newspaper of the Australian Workers’ Union, or the church press covered by Rachael Kohn.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps most importantly, the chapter does not survey coverage of *Kristallnacht* by the radical populist press so often quoted by Bartrop, such as the *Bulletin* or *Smith’s Weekly*. From 1880 until it ceased publication in 2008, the *Bulletin* was Australia’s weekly newsmagazine. In the late 1930s, it was deeply xenophobic, nativist and anti-Semitic.<sup>5</sup> So too was *Smith’s Weekly*: its anti-Semitism is well captured in the word coined by the newspaper in December 1938 to protest the admission of Jewish refugees: “Refu-Jews.”<sup>6</sup> I recognize that these newspapers provided their readers with an alternative perspective to the one provided by the mainstream newspapers cited earlier.

The news of the shooting of Ernst vom Rath by Herschel Grynszpan on 7 November 1938 appeared in the morning papers on Tuesday, 8 November, and a day later reports of Nazi reprisals began to appear: the banning of Jewish cultural activities and anti-Jewish mob demonstrations that saw storefronts smashed,<sup>7</sup> foreshadowing the massive violence that broke out after vom Rath’s death later on the 9th, which was reported in Australia the following day.

It was not until 11 November that newspaper readers across Australia would be presented with the first reports from Germany. The lead sentence of the Associated Australian Press wire

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<sup>4</sup> Rachael L.E. Kohn, “The Catholic and Anglican Church Press of New South Wales and the Jews, 1933–45,” in Paul R. Bartrop, ed., *False Havens: The British Empire and the Holocaust* (University Press of America, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> “By the 1940s *The Bulletin* was seen as a sad reactionary, racist and anti-Semitic relic that had become a self-parody.” Migration Heritage Centre, “1910 *The Bulletin* Magazine,” available at: <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/objectsthroughtime/1910-the-bulletin-magazine/>.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust*, 122. In a later article, Bartrop cites a *Smith’s Weekly* article published in July 1939 that claimed that there was “only one final solution of the Jewish problem”—“they should break down their old tribal isolation and inter-marry, on a vast scale, with their Gentile oppressors.” Cited in Paul R. Bartrop, “The Holocaust, the Aborigines, and the Bureaucracy of Destruction: An Australian Dimension of Genocide,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 3:1 (2001), 82.

<sup>7</sup> “Nazis Angry,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 November 1938, 17.

service story noted that “an orgy of destruction” of Jewish property had followed vom Rath’s death, and that phrase was selected by editors in a number of newsrooms across the country that morning as the headline.<sup>8</sup> Some headline writers alerted their readers to the central target of the violence.<sup>9</sup> Other newspapers chose less dramatic headlines.<sup>10</sup> But like newspapers across the western world, Australian newspapers, both the major urban dailies and the provincial and regional weeklies or biweeklies, provided descriptive accounts of the violence that erupted across Germany on the evening of 9 November 1938.

The pogrom was clearly the top foreign story, though how and where it was placed depended on the newspaper. By 1938, some Australian newspapers [132] had abandoned the *Times* of London format that featured the front pages of the newspaper filled with classified advertisements, and the “news” buried deep within the paper. The *Argus*, for example, had already moved to the layout favoured by the *New York Times*, which presented news on the front page, with important news presented on the top half of the broadsheet (“above the fold”), with multi-column banner headlines (rather than headlines for each column), the thickness of which was intended to convey the importance of the story. Thus the *Argus*, the *Courier-Mail*, and even the *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate* presented the news of the pogrom on page one, with the story clearly leading. In the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Age*, the *Mercury*, the *Advertiser*, and the *West Australian*, the stories about the beginning of *Kristallnacht* were located inside the paper, though usually presented as the “lead” story by being located in the top left corner of the page dedicated to the presentation of the news in general, or overseas news in particular.

While there were some differences in how the news of the violence in Germany was actually presented to readers across Australia, there were three important similarities. The first was that Australian newspapers were almost entirely dependent on wire services for their copy. The editors at most of the newspapers surveyed here would thus be working with the same copy received from the Australian Associated Press or Reuters; some, like the *Argus*, subscribed to an independent cable service. While editors at each newspaper would make an individual choice about how much of the wire story would be printed, the net result was that Australians would often read the same accounts pulled off the wires by editors in their locality.<sup>11</sup> Often reportage would depend heavily on repeating reports in British newspapers, such as the *Times* or the *Observer*. Importantly, no newspaper had a reporter in Germany, so there was no “Australian voice” in the reportage of the initial violence.

The second similarity—important to note given that today we tend to take for granted that news, particularly dramatic news, will be accompanied by visuals—was that the reportage of *Kristallnacht* was presented to Australians almost entirely without photographs of the destruction wrought by the pogrom. During this era the printing of photographs in newspapers was accomplished by rotogravure, which involved etching a metal cylinder from a photographic image. This was far more complex (and expensive) than setting lines of hot metal type, so

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<sup>8</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 November 1938, 13; *Courier-Mail*, 11 November 1938, 1; *Advertiser*, 11 November 1938, 29. In *Age*, the headline was “Reprisals Orgy”: 11 November 1938, 11.

<sup>9</sup> “No Mercy for Jews,” *Mercury*, 11 November 1938, 9; “New Campaign against Jews: Nazi Outbreaks,” *Argus*, 11 November 1938, 1; “German Brutality: Jews the Victims,” *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 12 November 1938, 1.

<sup>10</sup> “German Mobs Riot,” *West Australian*, 11 November 1938, 23; “Hitler’s Youth Gives a Display of Brutal Indiscipline against Jews,” *Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, 11 November 1938, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust*, 192.

newspapers not only used far fewer photographs to illustrate their articles, but tended to cluster photographs in pictorial sections (usually a single page). As a result of this technological limitation, Australian readers (like most newspaper readers in other countries) had relatively few visual images of the physical destruction in Germany and Austria, or the human suffering caused by the violence.

The third similarity, also unfamiliar to newspaper readers today, was that there was no “local content” in the news of *Kristallnacht* that was conveyed to readers. Today, a newspaper story may still be pulled from the wire services, but in the process of editing for local publication, editors, particularly at newspapers that conceive of themselves as “newspapers of record,” tend [133] to seek a local angle to incorporate into the wire story, such as seeking official comment from the national government. In this case, there was no “localization.” The wire stories were simply reproduced verbatim, and edited only to reduce the number of words. If government officials in Australia had views about *Kristallnacht* as the first reports were coming out of Germany, Australians would not have known from their newspapers. While some Australian politicians eventually did express their views on *Kristallnacht*, it tended to be primarily in parliamentary debates rather than in the daily press.

The aftermath of *Kristallnacht* continued to receive major attention in the Australian press in the weeks afterwards. For example, between 11 and 24 November, the *Courier-Mail* in Brisbane ran stories about *Kristallnacht* as its page-one lead every day except the 15th (when the newspaper’s lead story focused on an alleged plot against Hitler’s life).<sup>12</sup> Likewise, the *Argus* in Melbourne ran a page-one story about the violence and its aftermath every day for the seven days following November 11. It was not until the week of November 21 that the story fell off the *Argus*’s front page.<sup>13</sup> Both of these newspapers were the only ones that ran pictorials during this period: on the sixteenth, the *Argus* ran photographs that it had received from Europe by airmail. Run above the fold, the pictures, according to the cutline, showed “pathetic scenes” of refugees on the German-Polish frontier, adding: “Tired and hungry and shivering with cold they wanted to be returned to their homes.” On November 24, the *Courier-Mail* ran a pictorial of three photographs smuggled out of Germany that showed a synagogue in flames and wrecked shop fronts.<sup>14</sup>

Other newspapers also presented their readers with a steady series of wire service stories that recounted the violence in considerable detail, and the mounting reprisals imposed on the Jewish population by the Nazis; the reaction of the other great powers, in particular the highly critical attitudes of both the UK government and the president of the United States, Franklin

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<sup>12</sup> *Courier-Mail*, page 1: “Jews Beaten in Streets: Frightful Pogrom in Germany” (Saturday, 12 November); “Jews’ Fine of £80,000,000” (Monday, 14 November); “America Acts over Jews” (16 November); “Refugees Look to Australia: 60,000 Seek Entry” (17 November); “£40,000,000 to Aid Jew Refugees” (18 November); “Australia Expected to Aid Jews” (19 November); “Persecution of Jews Angers USA” (Monday, 21 November); “Nazis Paying Heavily for Pogrom” (22 November); “Australia to Admit Jew Refugees: Thousands Each Year” (23 November); “First Pictures of Onslaught on Jews” (24 November).

<sup>13</sup> *Argus*, lead article, page 1: “Nazis’ Orgy Passes: Day of Terror for Jews” (Saturday, 12 November); “Persecution of Jews” (Monday, 14 November); “Disgusted with Nazis” (15 November); “Opposition to Nazis Growing in Great Britain” (16 November); “Vast U.S.A. Arms Plan: 10,000 Planes May Be Built: Germany Rebuked” (17 November); “Efforts to Aid Jews: Britain Will Give Land” (18 November); “500 Young Jews” (19 November).

<sup>14</sup> “Opposition to Nazis Growing in Great Britain,” *Argus*, 16 November 1938, 1; “First Pictures of Onslaught on Jews,” *Courier-Mail*, 24 November 1938, 1.

Delano Roosevelt; the increasing efforts of German Jews to find refuge elsewhere; and the intensified efforts of both Britain and the United States to find multilateral solutions to the Jewish refugee problem, including schemes for large-scale settlements of German Jews in parts of the British Empire, including such localities as Tanganyika, British Guiana, New Guinea, and even the Northern Territory in Australia.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, the homogenizing effect of dependence on the wire services and the British press ensured that the narrative presented to Australians across the country was quite consistent. To be sure, one can see regional differences: the *Mercury* in Hobart and the *West Australian* in Perth devoted considerably fewer column inches to the issue than the *Argus* in Melbourne, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, or the *Courier-Mail* in Brisbane. This was likely a function of a parochialism produced by both size and distance, since there were Jewish communities in every Australian city, and refugees made their way to destinations around the country.<sup>16</sup>

[134] Editorial opinion among these mainstream papers was also relatively homogenous. Newspapers expressed themselves on two interrelated issues: the pogrom itself, and what Australia and Australians should do in response. In the immediate aftermath of the violence, a common response was to encourage protest. For example, the *Courier-Mail*'s first editorial, "Humanity Must Protest," limited itself to the view that "The German people must be made aware [that] the vengeance visited upon the Jews ... has aroused indignation, horror, and disgust." The purpose of such protests, the *Courier-Mail* suggested, was to ensure that "the best elements among the German people themselves should be strengthened in resistance to forces of barbarism."<sup>17</sup> A similar theme was sounded by the *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, which noted that Adolf Hitler's "onslaught on the Jews" had not only "horrified the world," but opened its eyes: "The world knows what he is and for what he stands, and never more will diplomacy be able to veneer the barbarism of his totalitarian regime."<sup>18</sup> The *Advertiser*, commenting on the view of Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi minister of public enlightenment and propaganda, that the violence reflect a "healthy instinct" of Germans, noted that "a horrified world could not be silent."<sup>19</sup> Likewise, the *Sydney Morning Herald* criticized the Nazi regime as "fanatical and merciless," and reminded its readers that public opinion in other countries was "ruled by horrified amazement."<sup>20</sup>

However, as discussions between the British and American governments turned to the possibility of assisting the emigration of Jews in Germany, the more general condemnations of the Nazi regime in Australian editorial opinion soon gave way to a focus on what role Australia could and should play in what the *Sydney Morning Herald* described to its readers as "this work

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<sup>15</sup> See "£40,000,000 to Aid Jew Refugees," *Courier-Mail*, 18 November 1938, 1: citing "reports from London," the *Courier-Mail* reported that "American Jewish interests" would be willing to donate £40 million to settle Jews around the British Empire, including Northern Territory "if Australia would agree." The government dismissed the reports.

<sup>16</sup> Of the 23,500 Australians who identified as Jewish in 1933, 43.8 percent lived in New South Wales, 40 percent in Victoria, 8.9 percent in Western Australia, 4.4 percent in Queensland, 2.2 percent in South Australia, and 0.3 percent in Tasmania. John Goldlust, "Jews in Australia: A Demographic Profile," in Geoffrey Brahm Levey and Philip Mendes, eds., *Jews and Australian Politics* (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), 13, Table 1.1.

<sup>17</sup> "Humanity Must Protest," *Courier-Mail*, 16 November 1938, 6.

<sup>18</sup> "German Barbarism," *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 15 November 1938, 2.

<sup>19</sup> "Germany's 'Healthy Instinct,'" *Advertiser*, 14 November 1938, 18.

<sup>20</sup> "The Nazi Outrages," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 November 1938, 16.

of international rescue.”<sup>21</sup> On this issue, mainstream press opinion in Australia was relatively united: Australia should contribute to such a plan to resettle German Jews. What differed among the mainstream newspapers was the enthusiasm for increasing the intake of Jewish refugees from Central Europe.

Of all Australian newspapers, the *Sydney Morning Herald* was clearly the most committed to a liberal approach to Jewish refugees from Europe. Its editor was Hugh Alexander McClure Smith, who had been appointed editor in January 1938 at the age of 35, and had made a name for himself (and the *Herald*) as an ardent critic of the appeasement of Nazi Germany.<sup>22</sup> McClure Smith took a personal role in selecting the lead story, selecting letters to the editor, and crafting editorial policy, and so it was perhaps not surprising that the *Herald's* editorial position reflected McClure Smith's own anti-German views. In the weeks after *Kristallnacht*, the *Sydney Morning Herald* ran two editorials on the issue of Australian policy. On November 18, the *Herald* editorial asserted that “foreign peoples cannot be content to condemn these excesses... they must address themselves with speed and vigour to the task of aiding the victims... The extent to which [135] this urgent salvage work is undertaken ... will test the real strength of humanitarian feeling abroad.” The editorial went on to say that:

Australia, as the most sparsely tenanted and exposed of the British Dominions, will not wish to evade her proper share of the responsibility which has been cast upon the non-German world. We have abundant room for migrants of a suitable type, and while experience has taught us to be wary of large-scale settlement schemes, it is high time for us to overhaul and liberalise our immigration machinery.

The *Herald* also encouraged its readers not to be “grudging or niggardly in character,” urging Australians to find a middle course between “indiscriminate migration, which would benefit neither Australia nor the refugees themselves, and a mean-spirited policy of obstruction to the admission of all aliens, there is a middle course which Australia should make haste to find.” The editorial concluded that “Our response to the challenge of Nazi persecution to the conscience of the world should be immediate and generous.”<sup>23</sup>

The newspaper returned to the issue a week later, following international negotiations on resettling Jewish refugees. Noting that it was now up to countries “to state what they are prepared to do,” the *Herald* noted that “To Australia in particular, with her declared need for settlement, the world will look most hopefully for a contribution that, measured by all concepts of humanity and justice, must be substantial.” It called on the government to “make up its mind on the number of admissions that it considers a creditable contribution to the problem.” It also suggested that the government should change how the actual selection of refugees was made, allowing selections to be made by the Australian High Commission in London rather than in Australia: “It would be intolerable if, while the unfortunate Jews try to hide themselves from mob fury in Germany ... their applications for permits to enter this country were permitted to make their leisurely progress

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<sup>21</sup> “The Refugee Problem,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 November 1938, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Jenny Newell, “McClure Smith, Hugh Alexander (1902-1961),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mcclure-smith-hugh-alexander-10914/text19387>.

<sup>23</sup> “A Challenge to Humanity,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 November 1938, 10.

from desk-tray to desk-tray at Canberra.” The editorial recognized that “some sectional opposition may be expected,” but it was confident that “Australians may reflect that, with judicious selection in London, this country should be benefited by the addition of settlers of high cultural, professional or technical ability.”<sup>24</sup>

The *West Australian* had sounded a similar note the previous day. “Australia will soon be called on to declare the share that Australia is willing to take of this refugee problem. Its answer will attract exceptional international interest, for in the eyes of the world Australia appears a much emptier country than it does to her own inhabitants.” The editorial suggested that “we cannot wisely or decently refuse, either on humanitarian grounds or for reasons of self-interest, to do our part in this world problem. Australia does need more people of the right stamp if her industries are to expand and her own people to prosper. On the subject of migration we need to revise [136] our superstitions.” While it called on the government to impose “wise conditions” (for “a numerically small community such as ours cannot absorb migrants in multitudes”), it called on Australians to be prepared “to share in this vast humane undertaking with goodwill.”<sup>25</sup>

In its editorializing, the *Courier-Mail* did not advance specific policy positions, but it did note that “if Australia has no contribution to make all our present pity for the German Jews and the protests we are voicing against their treatment will be worth little more than they cost us, which is nothing.”<sup>26</sup> In Adelaide, the *Advertiser* noted that selecting those with financial resources and training, and placing limited numbers, “Australia could both help to appease an acute situation, and gain settlers of energy and intelligence, who could be trusted to become useful and loyal citizens.”<sup>27</sup> The *Mercury* in Hobart was similarly disposed: “At first sight it may seem that the acceptance of large numbers of refugees ... will impose a heavy cost, yet it must be borne in mind that these people bring, in many cases, valuable knowledge and culture which cannot fail to be beneficial to whatever State in which they settle.”<sup>28</sup>

The *Argus*, by contrast, was distinctly less enthusiastic. “What is to become of the wandering Jews?” the newspaper’s editor asked. “Nobody wants them. Every English-speaking nation is horrified by this appalling outrage... But not one practical proposal has been made for providing in any country for an influx of Jews.” In Australia’s case, “though her indignation is deep and her sympathy sincere, can absorb but a few thousand of them at most. It is in reality not a problem for Australia, but for Europe, and Europe as a whole is unresponsive...”<sup>29</sup> A day later, the *Argus* was editorializing that the government’s “reasonable efforts” to contribute to the international effort “will meet with popular approval.” And while “the dolour of these people ... is indeed enough to melt to pity a heart of lead,” Australia “cannot, unhappily, do very much, for their number runs to millions, but what we can do will be done with cheerfulness and good will. Thus can we translate our sympathy into practice and at the same time demonstrate that there are in this free land hearts to pity and hands held out to save.”<sup>30</sup>

In short, the mainstream press presented Australians with a relatively homogenous portrayal of what was happening to Jews in Germany; how others in the international system,

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<sup>24</sup> “The Refugee Problem,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 November 1938, 10.

<sup>25</sup> “The Refugee Problem,” *West Australian*, 23 November 1938, 18.

<sup>26</sup> “Pity Is Not Enough,” *Courier-Mail*, 17 November 1938, 6.

<sup>27</sup> “Europe’s Homeless Army,” *Advertiser*, 18 November 1938, 28.

<sup>28</sup> “Jewish Refugee Problem,” *Mercury*, 23 November 1938, 8.

<sup>29</sup> “Dispersion,” *Argus*, 17 November 1938, 12.

<sup>30</sup> “Diversity in Immigration,” *Argus*, 24 November 1938, 10.

particularly the United States and Britain, were reacting; and what was being proposed to resolve the mounting problem of Jewish suffering in Germany and the growing number of refugees seeking to leave Germany. These newspapers also presented Australians with a generally similar normative frame for thinking about how they should think about how their country should contribute to the resolution of the refugee issue. But such mainstream editorial perspectives stood in stark contrast to the opinions of anti-refugee publications like the *Bulletin*, which, for example, opined after *Kristallnacht* that “Australia cannot be expected to imperil its existence or to receive vast masses of alien refugees for the gratification of German Jews, New York politicians and editors.”<sup>31</sup>

### [137] Community Responses

Ten days after *Kristallnacht*, Australia’s high commissioner in London, Stanley Bruce, opined in a cablegram to the prime minister, Joseph Lyons, that public opinion in Australia was “running high” about the violence in Germany.<sup>32</sup> A report by the Commonwealth Investigation Branch—Australia’s internal security service at the time—dated November 21, 1938 concluded that “the recent press publications of the persecutions in Germany have had a soothing effect” on anti-refugee opinion in Australia.<sup>33</sup> But such conclusions about public opinion are impressionistic at best, for they would have been formed on the basis of an incomplete portrait of how Australians responded to *Kristallnacht*. As Blakeney and Bartrop both remind us, it is difficult to determine public opinion on the Jewish refugee issue.<sup>34</sup> In the absence of public opinion polls, we must depend on evidence of political action by citizens, such as letters to the editor, letters to the government, public meetings or other forms of political or social organization to provide a glimpse of the responses of Australians to *Kristallnacht* in the weeks immediately after the violence.

The most active community organization was the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, which had originally been organized in the mid-1930s as the Australian fund-raising effort of the German Jewish Refugee Committee in London, but had been transformed to assist Jewish migrants from Germany. The AJWS’s “European Refugee Appeal” in 1938 raised £100,000 (all figures in Australian pounds<sup>35</sup>) throughout the country. Its Victorian campaign, for example, was headed by Sir Isaac Isaacs, a former High Court justice and who had served as the first Australian-born governor-general from 1930 to 1936.<sup>36</sup> The Society also worked to select refugees that it sponsored for immigration. Working with the Department of the Interior, which at

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<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Blakeney, *Australia and the Jewish Refugees*, 145.

<sup>32</sup> Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy*, vol. 1, 1938, doc. 318, Mr S.M. Bruce, High Commissioner in London, to Mr J.A. Lyons, Cablegram unnumbered, London, 21 November 1938. Available at: <http://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/historical/volume-01/historical-document-01-318.html>.

<sup>33</sup> Cited in Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust*, 99.

<sup>34</sup> Blakeney, *Australia and the Jewish Refugees*, 134; Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust*, 96.

<sup>35</sup> From 1910 to until decimalization and the introduction of the dollar in 1966, Australia’s national currency was the Australian pound, usually (but not always) pegged to the pound sterling. In 1938, £1 had approximately the same purchasing power as \$40 today.

<sup>36</sup> “Victorian Plan to Raise £25,000,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 November 1938, 13.

that time was responsible for immigration, the AJWS obtained landing permits for refugees, assisted their transportation to Australia, and helped refugees settle in Australia.<sup>37</sup>

However, fund-raising campaigns were also initiated by Christian churches. In Adelaide, the general president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Wilhelm Janzow, denounced the Nazi campaign as “pagan,” and noted that Lutherans had helped settle Jewish refugees from earlier campaigns. He announced that Lutheran churches in South Australia were undertaking a new fund-raising campaign to assist with landing money and offers of employment.<sup>38</sup> In Brisbane, Rev. A.T. Gurr of the South Brisbane Congregational Church called on Australians to provide sanctuary for the refugees, noting that it was the “duty of Christian people to care for the oppressed.”<sup>39</sup> The Unitarian Church despatched a group to Canberra to press the prime minister to allow the church to guarantee migrants.<sup>40</sup>

There were some public protests against Germany. For example, the NSW Trade and Labour Council publicly demanded the deportation of the German consul-general in Sydney, Rudolf Asmis,<sup>41</sup> who was subsequently [138] attacked by the *Labor Daily* (prompting the prime minister, Joseph Lyons, to issue a formal apology “for the grace breach of courtesy and respect due the representative of another nation”<sup>42</sup>). On November 14, the Victorian branch of the League for Peace and Democracy condemned the atrocities, called on the federal government to protest, and asked Australians to cease buying German products.<sup>43</sup> The South Australia branch of the League called for a liberalization of refugee admissions policy, arguing that refugees would be no burden on Australia.<sup>44</sup> In Melbourne, the secretary of the Australian Aborigines League, William Cooper, led a protest to the German consulate, where they tried unsuccessfully to deliver a resolution condemning the persecution of Jews and Christians in Germany to the consul-general, R.W. Dreschler (for which Cooper was honored with his own memorial and garden at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem).<sup>45</sup> In Perth, a protest meeting, presided over by the lord mayor, Charles Harper, passed resolutions expressing horror or disgust at the treatment of Jews in Germany.<sup>46</sup>

Another indicator of opinion was letters that individual citizens or civil society organizations wrote to politicians or policy-makers, or sent for publication to the editors of newspapers. Bartrop cites a number of letters sent to politicians in the middle of 1938 that reveal considerable opposition to Jewish refugees, focusing on two assumptions: Jewish refugees would produce social disharmony in “British” Australia; and/or Jewish refugees would take jobs away

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<sup>37</sup> On the work of the AJWS, see Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust*, 91–92, 136–38. On the origins of the Society, see Saul Symonds, “‘Australia and the Refugees’: A Reply,” *Australian Quarterly* 14:1 (March 1942), 67–72.

<sup>38</sup> “Lutherans to Help Persecuted Jews,” *Advertiser*, 18 November 1938, 30.

<sup>39</sup> “Sanctuary for Jews,” *Courier-Mail*, 21 November 1938, 3.

<sup>40</sup> “Move to Assist Migrants,” *Age*, 24 November 1938, 12.

<sup>41</sup> “Trades Hall Sympathy,” *Courier-Mail*, 18 November 1938, 1.

<sup>42</sup> “Attacks on Dr Asmis,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 December 1938, 13.

<sup>43</sup> L.P. Fox to prime minister, 15 November 1938, in National Archives of Australia, R420, Treatment of Jews.

<sup>44</sup> “Plea for Jewish Refugees,” *Advertiser*, 1 December 1938, 7.

<sup>45</sup> “Deputation Not Admitted,” *Argus*, 7 December 1938, 3; John Lyons, “Israel Honours Aboriginal Elder for Defying Nazis,” *Australian*, 31 July 2010.

<sup>46</sup> “A Perth Protest Meeting,” *West Australian*, 1 December 1938, 19.

from Australians.<sup>47</sup> However, after *Kristallnacht*, large numbers of Australian organizations wrote directly to the prime minister to register their protests over the Nazi treatment of Jews, and to urge on the federal government a range of policy options.<sup>48</sup>

Letters to the editors of newspapers provide another window to public opinion, although, because editors choose which letters to publish, they are a highly partial and thus problematic indicator of opinion. Moreover, compared to the present era, when it is normal for the “letters to the editor” section to occupy a significant amount of editorial page space, the letters sections of Australian newspapers in 1938 were limited, often with just two or three letters. After *Kristallnacht*, those few letters to the editor were overwhelmingly critical of Germany and sympathetic to the plight of refugees. To be sure, many of the sympathetic letters reflected racist stereotyping: as one letter-writer put it confidently, “the Jews are an energetic and progressive race and should do much to develop [Australia],”<sup>49</sup> echoing a common assertion of those sympathetic to refugees that Jews should be welcomed because they were so “intelligent” and “hard-working.” Indeed, the CIB report cited at the outset of this section may well have been looking at the letters to the editor section, for the kind of anti-refugee/anti-Jewish sentiments that Bartrop cites from mid-1938 diminished dramatically after *Kristallnacht*. To be sure, one can still find such sentiments: on November 17, the *Age* published a letter by a correspondent identified only as “Vigilant” from Brighton, who asserted that allowing Jews into Australia on the grounds that they are hard [139] working would be a “blunder.” “Have we any hard-working Jews in this country?” “Vigilant” asked rhetorically. “I think not.”<sup>50</sup> But what is notable about this letter is how unusual it was.

### **The Impact on Policy**

Prior to *Kristallnacht*, as Bartrop makes clear, the Australian government did not have a *refugee* policy; it only had an *immigration* policy.<sup>51</sup> In other words, there was no provision in Australian policy for seeing, much less treating, those who might be fleeing persecution as anything other than an applicant for migration. They were simply classified as “Jewish residents of Europe.” However, as a result of a decline in British migration, immigration provisions were loosened in 1936, so that by 1938 significant numbers of these individuals were being admitted. Each year, as noted above, approximately 500 individuals were guaranteed by the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, which in 1937 had been permitted by the Department of the Interior to vet applications and take responsibility for settling those they sponsored. In this way, the AJWS became, in Bartrop’s words, the “protector and standard-setter for refugees.”<sup>52</sup> In addition to the five hundred guaranteed by the AJWS, one thousand landing permits were granted each year to those who were guaranteed by family or friends in Australia. Finally, entry could be granted to applicants

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<sup>47</sup> Paul R. Bartrop, “Indifference and Inconvenience: Jewish Refugees and Australia, 1933-1945,” in Bartrop, ed., *False Havens*, 134–35.

<sup>48</sup> See the letters from numerous Australian organizations and individuals in National Archives of Australia, Series A461, R420, “Treatment of Jews in Germany.”

<sup>49</sup> *Advertiser*, 22 November 1938, 26.

<sup>50</sup> *Age*, 17 November 1938, 12.

<sup>51</sup> Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust*, 245; Paul R. Bartrop, “The Australian Government’s ‘Liberalisation’ of Refugee Immigration Policy in 1938: Fact or Myth?” *Menorah: Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* 2:1 (June 1988), 70; “Indifference and Inconvenience,” 127.

<sup>52</sup> Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust*, 92.

who did not have a guarantor, but who had £200 in landing capital (approximately \$8000 in purchasing power today).

In mid-1938, however, the increase in the number of applications following the *Anschluss* between Germany and Austria in March prompted the Australian cabinet to impose a quota on the admission of non-guaranteed Jews: henceforth, no more than three hundred applicants in this class would be admitted, even though the government in Canberra was officially committed to its declared policy of not discriminating against any nationality, race, or religion.<sup>53</sup>

This policy did not change as a result of Australian participation in the international conference that convened at the initiative of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt at Évian-les-Bains from July 6 to July 15. The Intergovernmental Committee was intended to address the growing problem of Jewish refugees seeking to flee Nazi persecution, by encouraging the countries participating in this conference to accept more refugees from Nazism. The Lyons government sent the minister for trade and customs, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas W. White, to represent Australia. White's speech to the conference underlined Canberra's commitment to the status quo. White noted that existing policy was already leading to levels of migration "comparable with that of any other country." However, "under the circumstances, Australia cannot do more." Not only would it be unfair to privilege "one particular class of non-British subject," but there was an additional consideration: "It will no doubt be appreciated also that, as we have no real racial problems, [140] we are not desirous of importing one by encourage any scheme of large-scale foreign migration."<sup>54</sup> On July 27, the prime minister's department reaffirmed existing Australian policy.<sup>55</sup>

Events in Europe would force a reconsideration of this policy. The Munich crisis at the end of September produced yet another wave of refugees, and *Kristallnacht* in November prompted serious discussions between the British and American governments about finding a multilateral solution to the refugee problem in Central Europe. There was a concern among many Australians, in Bartrop's words, that "the United Kingdom, after several years of pursuing a policy of appeasement towards Nazi Germany, might now offer Australia as a land where Germany could deposit its unwanted Jews."<sup>56</sup>

The Australian High Commissioner in London, Stanley Bruce, was certainly concerned about such a possibility, given the ideas for block settlement that were floated in the week after *Kristallnacht*. So on the evening of November 21 he sent two cablegrams to Prime Minister Lyons. The first presented an argument for a pre-emptive announcement by the Australian government outlining its contribution to the refugee problem. In Bruce's view, a pre-emptive announcement would in the first instance avoid the possibility of embarrassment: "We may find ourselves in an embarrassing position if no public statement is made as to our attitude notwithstanding the fact that the number we are taking at present bears favourable comparison with what is being done by any other country." However, an announcement "would greatly increase, particularly in the United States, the goodwill towards and the prestige of Australia as the country that has made the most practical and sympathetic contribution..." Finally, Bruce

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<sup>53</sup> Bartrop, "Indifference and Inconvenience," 136.

<sup>54</sup> Cited in Bartrop, "Fact or Myth?" 69; see also Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust*, 71–72; Blakeney, *Australia and the Jewish Refugees*, 121–37.

<sup>55</sup> Bartrop, "Indifference and Inconvenience," 134.

<sup>56</sup> Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust*, 109.

argued that the government should take advantage of the state of public opinion in Australia: “while public opinion is running high an immediate announcement of a definite policy, even if a bold one, would probably be accepted whereas if the opportunity is allowed to pass even the present number of refugees . . . may prove an embarrassment to the Government in the future.” Bruce suggested that the government announce that thirty thousand refugees could be taken over three years.<sup>57</sup>

The second cablegram, sent two hours later, was a suggested statement that the government could make. Bruce suggested that the government couch the initiative in the need for international cooperation. But he also suggested that any announcement stress the intention of the government to ensure that there would be minimal disruption:

In arriving at the figure of 30,000 over period of three years the Government has been influenced by the necessity that the existing standards of living should not be disturbed and of reconciling with the interests of refugees the interests of its own present population and of the people of the British race who desire to establish in Australia.<sup>58</sup>

Bruce’s suggestion was sent to the Department of the Interior for comment. The secretary, or bureaucratic head, of the department, J.A. Carrodus, [141] argued to his minister, John McEwen, that Australia could not absorb thirty thousand refugees over three years; the most that Australia could absorb over that period, he suggested, was fifteen thousand.<sup>59</sup> The cabinet considered the matter at a meeting on November 28, but leaked accounts of the meeting revealed some disagreement: while the quota of five thousand had been mentioned, according to one report, “a section of the Cabinet” believed that the quota should be lower. In response to questions, Lyons promised that an announcement would be made by the end of the week.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the issue was resolved at a meeting of cabinet on November 30, the ministers present agreeing to the quota of five thousand refugees a year, with the proviso that the “quota may be exceeded in admitting approved Aryans.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Doc. 318, Bruce to Lyons, unnumbered cablegram, London, 21 November 1938 (7:44 pm).

<sup>58</sup> Doc. 319, Bruce to Lyons, unnumbered cablegram, London, 21 November 1938 (10:00 pm).

<sup>59</sup> Bartrop, “Indifference and Inconvenience,” 138–39.

<sup>60</sup> See *Courier-Mail*, 29 November 1938, 1; “Jewish Migrant Problem,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 November, 11.

<sup>61</sup> National Archives, Series A2694, vol. 19, pt. 1, Cabinet minutes, 30 November 1938, 209, 255. This decision introduced three racial/religious categories in Australian refugee determination policies: applicants were to be classified as Aryans, non-Aryan Christians (“people wholly or partly of Jewish race of the Christian religion”) or Jews. Ironically (or not: in “Australian Dimension of Genocide,” Bartrop draws explicit comparisons between the race-based policies of the Department of the Interior on the issue of Aboriginal Australians and Jewish refugees), this trifold classification almost exactly mirrored the trifold classification system then in use in the Reich, which determined one’s racial “ancestry” or “lineage” (*Abstammungs*). Under the highly bureaucratized Nazi system, one was classified by the local *Gauamt für Sippenforschung* (District Office for Genealogical Research) according to the religion that had been noted on the birth registration of each of one’s four grandparents: if one had four grandparents who had been registered as Jewish at birth, one was classified as *Juden*; if one had four grandparents who had been registered as Christian at birth, one was classified as *Deutschblütig* (“German-blooded”); and if one had one, two or three Jewish grandparents, one was classified as a *Mischling* (literally, mongrel or half-breed)—either “grade 1” or “grade 2” depending on the “mix.” Note that in the Reich only birth

John McEwen, the minister for the interior, rose in the House of Representatives on December 1 to announce the new policy, using much of the language that had been suggested by Bruce to the prime minister ten days before to justify the government's decisions, with Bruce's figure of thirty thousand replaced by the lower figure of fifteen thousand.<sup>62</sup>

The Australian policy announced on 1 December was widely lauded. Australian newspapers, with evident pride, quoted positive British press opinion: the *Observer*, for example, called it a "striking illustration of how noble compassion can girdle the globe."<sup>63</sup> The *Times* of London described the move as "characteristically generous. The Commonwealth [of Australia] has certainly done its full share."<sup>64</sup> And Australian newspapers themselves welcomed the decision. The Lyons government, the *Sydney Morning Herald* asserted, "has acted with commendable promptitude." However, it continued to press for greater liberalization: "Australia is doing its share, but the share could be more handsome."<sup>65</sup> For its part, the *Courier-Mail* also welcomed the decision: "Real humanity has prompted the Federal Government's proposal and the Federal Opposition's approval of it, for it has triumphed over considerable prejudice against, and distrust of, foreign immigration."<sup>66</sup> Needless to say, local community groups were likewise very pleased with the outcome.<sup>67</sup>

The decision announced on December 1 also galvanized the creation of refugee councils to facilitate the arrival and assimilation of refugees. Public meetings were organized by the lord mayors of Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide. In Melbourne, the lord mayor, Arthur Coles, was joined by the Anglican archbishop and a number of others to organize assistance to refugees.<sup>68</sup> In Sydney, the lord mayor, Norman Nock, established a refugee emergency council, with a blue-ribbon council, including representatives from the Labour Council of NSW, and a number of labor groups, the Salvation Army, the League of Nations Union, the National Council of Women, the president of the Graziers' Association of NSW, a number of labour groups, and business people such as R.J. Hawkes, former president of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, Sir Clifton Love, chairman of the Manufacturers' Mutual Insurance, R.W. Gillespie, the chairman of the board of directors [142] of the Bank of NSW, and Warwick Fairfax, owner of the *Sydney Morning Herald*.<sup>69</sup> In Adelaide, the lord mayor, A.G. Barrett, approved the formation of a committee that included all the Protestant churches, the Salvation Army, Louis Rubin-Zacks, first minister of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation, the Society of Friends, and the League of Nations Union.<sup>70</sup> The lord mayor of Melbourne joined with the Anglican archbishop of Melbourne and the League of Nations Union to organize the refugee council in that city.<sup>71</sup>

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registration mattered: those who had converted to Christianity, or who had been registered at birth as Christian but had Jewish grandparents, were classified as *Juden* or *Mischlings*.

<sup>62</sup> Australia, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 158, 1 December 1938, 2534–37.

<sup>63</sup> "Australia's Noble Compassion," *Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, 6 December 1938, 7.

<sup>64</sup> "Generous Offer," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 December 1938, 11.

<sup>65</sup> "A Home for the Homeless," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 December 1938, 10.

<sup>66</sup> "Aid for Refugees," *Courier-Mail*, 2 December 1938, 6.

<sup>67</sup> "Jewish Community's Delight at News," *Advertiser*, 2 December 1938, 29.

<sup>68</sup> "Plans to Aid Refugees," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 December 1938, 12.

<sup>69</sup> "Assimilation of Refugees," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 December 1938, 12.

<sup>70</sup> "Committee to Aid Refugees," *Advertiser*, 14 December 1938, 27.

<sup>71</sup> "Plans to Aid Refugees," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 December 1938, 12.

## Analysis

It is clear that, *pace* Strauss, *Kristallnacht* did have major repercussions in Australia. Certainly the Australian response to the violence in Germany—the “Fifteen Thousand” policy—seems at first blush much more generous than the responses of other Dominions in the British Commonwealth that were geographically distant from Europe, such as Canada or South Africa: in the wake of *Kristallnacht*, the Canadian government resolutely maintained its “none-is-too-many” approach,<sup>72</sup> and South Africa did not change its overtly harsh restrictions on Jewish refugees.<sup>73</sup>

How then can we explain the relative magnanimity of the moment in November 1938? One possibility is that, as Bartrop notes, historically one did not find the kind of antisemitism in Australia that was deeply embedded in Canada or the United States; antisemitism was not a feature of Australian political culture and not a determinant of Australian policy.<sup>74</sup> Could this be one explanation for the “Fifteen Thousand” policy? While historically there might have been a relative absence of antisemitism in Australian politics, it is clear that the arrival of large numbers of Jewish migrants in the midst of the economic downturn caused by the Great Depression did generate some antisemitic sentiments, although, as noted earlier, they tended to be expressed much less frequently during the weeks immediately after *Kristallnacht*. Nonetheless we can see some evidence of antisemitism during the debates in Parliament in November, though few were inclined to be as blunt as A.E. “Texas” Green (Australian Labor Party: Kalgoorlie, WA), who interrupted a speech about Jewish refugees by McEwen by insisting “They will grab your farm if you let them in.”<sup>75</sup>

It is likewise possible to try to locate causality for the Australian response in the well-established element in Australian political culture of the “fair go”—Australian shorthand for the imaginary—mythical or not—that a classless egalitarianism is deeply embedded in Australia.<sup>76</sup> In this view, the shift in Australian policy could be attributed to this broader cultural element. The problem with this hypothesis is that while there is considerable evidence of complaints about Jewish refugees displacing Australian workers, one can find little evidence of the “fair go” imaginary—unlike refugee discourse in Australia in the early 2000s, which was framed explicitly in the notion of the “fair go.”<sup>77</sup>

[143] A more narrow explanation would focus on the “Fifteen Thousand” policy as the product of a particular confluence of factors. These would include public opinion, but they also focus on the policymakers themselves and the larger context in which they were making decisions. It is clear that the violence in Germany was, as Bartrop suggests, “a watershed for

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<sup>72</sup> “None is too many” was the reported response of a Canadian official who was asked in 1945 how many Jews would be allowed into Canada after the war. Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983, 2012); Lois Foster, “No Northern Option: Canada and Refugees from Nazism before the Second World War,” in Bartrop, ed., *False Havens*.

<sup>73</sup> Edna Bradlow, “South African Policy and Jewish Refugee Immigration in the 1930s,” in Bartrop, ed., *False Havens*, 239–52.

<sup>74</sup> Bartrop, “Indifference and Inconvenience,” 127.

<sup>75</sup> *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 158, 22 November 1938, 1851.

<sup>76</sup> For example, Elaine Thompson, *Fair Enough: Egalitarianism in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1994).

<sup>77</sup> For example, Binoy Kampmark, “‘Spying for Hitler’ and ‘Working for Bin Laden’: Comparative Australian Discourse on Refugees,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 19:1 (March 2006), 1–21.

Australian opinion,”<sup>78</sup> creating in turn the political conditions for a shift in policy towards the refugees being created by persecution in Europe. Nazi persecutions shifted the terms of discourse in Australian politics, even if only briefly: anti-immigrant and antisemitic voices were quieted, and those with a more liberal and internationalist vision, such as McClure Smith and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, or Stanley Bruce, the high commissioner in London, were able to secure approval for alternative policy options.

In particular, Bruce’s initiative on November 21 proved to be a crucial catalyst. His cablegrams to Canberra appear to have been driven by a number of factors: his desire to avoid another war with Germany; his desire to maintain unity in the British Empire’s foreign policy, a desire that sat paradoxically with his strong Australian nationalism that prompted him to want to avoid his country being possibly embarrassed by the imperial government in London on this issue; and his embrace of internationalism, unusual for the era, that saw the importance of multilateral responses to global problems.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, Bruce’s initiative clearly framed the policy debate over the next ten days in Canberra. The fact that his suggested statement was used almost verbatim, with only his proposed figure of thirty thousand replaced by fifteen thousand, demonstrates how important his intervention was. And, while there were clearly disagreements among the ministers in cabinet about how widely Australia should open its doors to Jewish refugees, there was little disagreement about the preemptive tactic proposed by Bruce.

The disagreement within cabinet over the most appropriate levels of openness to refugees needs to be put in the context of the broader political context of November 1938. Bartrop has written that the Lyons government just “made up the policy of 15,000 as it went along.”<sup>80</sup> This was indeed an apt description of the policy process in this case. But the ad hoc quality should not be surprising given that the *Kristallnacht* crisis unfolded as the Lyons government was itself distracted by deep internal problems. The prime minister was very ill, afflicted with the heart condition from which he would die in office merely months later. His United Australia Party cabinet was fraught with dissension and power plays for succession.<sup>81</sup> In this broader context, it is perhaps not surprising that the inner cabinet that met on November 30 should have eventually deferred to the minister responsible, John McEwen.

And while we do not have a sense of whether McEwen embraced Bruce’s views of the broader international situation in November 1938, we do have some evidence that he was consistently concerned with Australia’s need for immigration, and that he firmly believed there was a crucial relationship between population and defense: “If Australia was to defend itself ... [it] [144] had to have a strong and continuing immigration program, preferably from the United Kingdom and Ireland because such migrants would assimilate more easily, but also from continental Europe because its people were hard-working and ambitious.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust*, 96.

<sup>79</sup> David Lee, *Stanley Melbourne Bruce: Australian Internationalist* (London: Continuum International, 2010), esp. 105, 121–28.

<sup>80</sup> Bartrop, “Fact or Myth?” 80.

<sup>81</sup> For a description, see Anne Henderson, *Joseph Lyons: The People’s Prime Minister* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2011), 414–23.

<sup>82</sup> Peter Golding, *Black Jack McEwen: Political Gladiator* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), 167. Golding notes (87) that “Throughout his life, McEwen was preoccupied with the need for Australia to increase its population.... He felt it was morally indefensible for such a vast country to have so few people and he believed over time it would be impossible to justify it.”

The cabinet's deference to McEwen appears to have been strengthened by the evolution of the prime minister's own attitudes towards international affairs in late 1938. As David Bird has noted, Joseph Lyons's response to *Kristallnacht* was strongly influenced by his general support for a policy of appeasement as a means of averting war with Germany. Insisting that "Germany's internal affairs be separated from diplomatic concerns," Lyons persistently refused to express any public sympathy for those being persecuted in Germany. (Indeed, Bird notes that there is not even any evidence of Lyons's private views on *Kristallnacht*.) However, in Bird's view, such a refusal to speak out was not the result of "coarse indifference"; rather, "Lyons's taciturnity at this time ought to be interpreted as an example of his single-minded resolution that nothing (except Australian security) must stand in the way of European appeasement."<sup>83</sup> However, it is clear that Lyons's pro-appeasement inclinations were finding less support in cabinet, and Bird notes that the prime minister "bowed to cabinet consensus" on some matters relating to Germany.<sup>84</sup>

In short, looking at the significant shift in Australian policy that was prompted by *Kristallnacht* does not deny the importance of political culture; what it does suggest is that policy must be seen as framed within that culture. In the case of *Kristallnacht*, Australian policymakers in Canberra sought to respond to different pressures on them: possible embarrassment by the imperial government in London, calls for greater liberalization from some, and concerns about the negative impact of greater liberalization from others.

### Conclusion

Like an optometrist's phoropter that purposely refracts one's vision, this exploration of the Australian responses to *Kristallnacht* has been purposely narrowed to those few weeks after the pogrom unleashed across the German Reich on November 9. Its purpose has been to show how *Kristallnacht* affected Australians and Australian policy, to produce what, in relative terms at least, was a magnanimous moment with the adoption of the "Fifteen Thousand" policy.

But it is important to recognize that it was a magnanimous *moment*. For, as Paul R. Bartrop demonstrates so clearly in all his scholarly work on Australian policy and the Holocaust, to get a complete picture, we must look at that moment in broader context. In particular, we need to recognize that the policy, as embraced by cabinet on November 30, was in fact not as liberal or as generous as it might first appear. As Bartrop notes, the policy that existed prior to *Kristallnacht* that consisted of the three categories—500 sponsored [145] by the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, 1,000 guaranteed by family or friends, and non-guaranteed individuals who had sufficient landing capital at a quota of 300 per month—would have numbered approximately 5,100 Jewish refugees per year. The 30 November decision not only reduced that number to 5,000, but, importantly, when the policy was actually implemented, it actually *reduced* the number of Jewish refugees.

The implementation of cabinet's decision of November 30 was left to the bureaucrats in the Department of the Interior. Bartrop entitles his chapter on this phase of Australian policy "The Bureaucrats Triumphant (January–March 1939)" to underscore the degree to which the antirefugee and anti-Jewish position taken by the department, and particularly the secretary, J.A. Carrodus, was in fact reflected in how the "Fifteen Thousand" policy was implemented. In brief,

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<sup>83</sup> David S. Bird, *J.A. Lyons—The Tame Tasmanian: Appeasement and Rearmament in Australia, 1932–39* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008), 270–71.

<sup>84</sup> Bird, *Lyons*, 279.

in January 1939, the department embraced a classification scheme that explicitly differentiated between Jewish and non-Jewish refugees. Of the five thousand places, four thousand would be allocated to Jewish refugees, and one thousand would be allotted to refugees who were not Jewish. The existing £200 landing capital was increased to £1000 (approximately \$40,000 in purchasing power today). For the four thousand Jewish refugees, an allotment scheme was specified: 900 places for those who had at least £1000 in landing capital; 1500 places for those with less than £1000, but who had been referred to the Australian Jewish Welfare Society and judged to have “satisfactory prospects of absorption” into Australian society; 750 places for those who were guaranteed by the AJWS; 600 who were guaranteed others (so-called Form 40 cases); and 250 places reserved for special cases.<sup>85</sup> In other words, had the cabinet done nothing on November 30, 1938, it is likely that the number of Jewish refugees able to enter Australia would have been higher than the 5,080 who were admitted in 1939 before the outbreak of war in Europe brought refugee migration to a halt.

Moreover, in the months after this scheme was introduced, the cabinet imposed further restrictions as the number of applications for migration to Australia increased dramatically, particularly from Jews who were not considered refugees (i.e., Jews who were not suffering persecution from Nazi authorities in Germany, Austria or Sudetenland). McEwen noted to the cabinet that “If a Jewish problem is not to arise in Australia, with the attendant anti-Semitic feeling, a limit should be placed on the total number of Jews admitted annually.”<sup>86</sup> The regime would become even more restricted over the course of 1939.<sup>87</sup>

The magnanimous moment, in short, was just that—momentary. And while it did make Australia the “odd man out”—to use an expression commonly used in contemporary Australian foreign policy debates<sup>88</sup>—among the other Dominions in November 1938, the way in which the “Fifteen Thousand” policy was implemented in 1939 puts that moment in perspective, making Australia, in Bartrop’s view, no less a “false haven” than other countries with more restrictive policies.<sup>89</sup>

## [Endnotes 146–50]

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<sup>85</sup> Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust*, 136; Bartrop, “Fact or Myth?,” 136.

<sup>86</sup> Bartrop, “Fact or Myth?” 79–80.

<sup>87</sup> Bartrop, “Indifference and Inconvenience,” 141–43.

<sup>88</sup> This expression—according to the OED, “a person or thing differing from all others of a group in some respect”—was commonly used in foreign policy debates in the 1990s, when Australians debated whether their country was part of Asia; it became a favourite trope for describing Australia’s “oddness” among its neighbours. Indeed, the foreign minister during this period, Gareth Evans, worked hard to get Australians to think of their country as an integral part of the Asia-Pacific region, pushing the idea of Australia as Asia’s “odd man in.” Richard A. Higgott and Kim Richard Nossal, “Odd Man In, Odd Man Out: Australia’s Liminal Position in Asia Revisited,” *Pacific Review* 21:5 (December 2008): 623–34.

<sup>89</sup> Bartrop, “Indifference and Inconvenience,” 150.