'Chifley liked them Blond': DP Immigrants for Australia[1]

There had been some doubt about the quality of these DPs who had the blood of a number of races in their veins. Many were red-headed and blue-eyed. There was also a number of natural platinum blondes of both sexes. The men were handsome and the women beautiful. It was not hard to sell immigration to the Australian people once the press published photographs of that group. – Arthur Calwell, Minister for Immigration.[2]

In 1949, bestselling author Frank Clune was commissioned by the Australian Department of Immigration to write a book on the International Refugee Organisation (IRO)'s Displaced Persons (DPs) camps in Europe and the way in which the DPs were being 'recruited and transported' to Australia.[3] Clune was enthusiastic, reporting that these potential 'New Australians' were of 'Slavonic racial stock': 'all had good eyes, beautiful natural teeth, and clear, fresh complexions'.[4] As well as being 'young,

---

[1] Arthur Calwell, cited by Helen Ferber. Ferber, an Australian working with the (PC)IRO, described Calwell's delegation as discussing with her 'DP immigrants for Australia, whom they were off to select'. Letter from Helen Ferber, Paris, 21 July 1947, Papers of Helen Ferber, 1937-2005, MS Acc06.027, National Library of Australia (NLA), Canberra.

[2] A. A. Calwell, *Be Just and Fear Not* (Hawthorn, Vic: Lloyd O'Neill in assoc. with Rigby, 1972), 103.

[3] Frank Clune, *All Roads Lead to Rome: A Pilgrimage to an Eternal City, and a Look Around War-torn Europe* (Sydney, NSW: Angus & Robertson, 1950), viii.

[4] Clune, *All Roads Lead to Rome*, 220, 231.

healthy, and able to work', Clune described the DPs as being of a 'heroic type':

> Despite Bolshevik blandishments, they refused to return and submit to Russian regimentation, with its crazy one-sided ideas of forced labour, Stalin-idolatry, bogus 'trials', low standards of living and cruel Asiatic cruelties.[5]

Clune thus reassured the Australian public that the DPs were racially and politically acceptable: white European (that is, not Jewish or Asian) anti-communists who valued freedom.[6] In this, Clune was following the categorizations used by the International Refugee Organisation in order to market the heterogenous multitude of post-war DPs for resettlement in western countries. This article traces the political evolution of these two standards of acceptability in relation to the first mass non-British migration program to Australia: 170,000 'Displaced Persons' (DPs) – predominantly Central and Eastern Europeans – who arrived as International Refugee Organisation (IRO)-sponsored refugees between 1947 and 1952.

'Displaced Persons'[7] in Post-War Europe

In the immediate post-war period, Displaced Persons were categorized by the Allied forces as those persons who found themselves outside their

---

[5] Clune, *All Roads Lead to Rome*, 268, 40.
[6] Clune, *All Roads Lead to Rome*, 220, 40.
[7] For a fuller discussion of the categorisations of Displaced Persons in Europe, see Jayne Persian, 'Displaced Persons and the Politics of International Categorisation(s)', *Journal of Australian Politics and History*, 58, no. 4 (December 2012), 481-496.

own country, predominantly in Germany and Austria. The grouping included concentration camp inmates, voluntary and forced labourers, (non-German) soldiers in military units withdrawing westwards, and civilian evacuees fleeing west from the oncoming Soviet Army. These groups were made up predominantly of Jewish and non-Jewish Poles, Ukrainians, Russians, Belarussians, 'Balts' (Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians), Hungarians, Yugoslavs and nationals of Romania, Bulgaria and Albania. There were approximately 12 million classifiable Displaced Persons in and around Europe at the conclusion of the war in May 1945.[8]

The expectation was that all of these DPs would return home, and most did. However, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) soon came up against problematic DPs who either had nowhere to return to, or refused repatriation, citing 'persecution': this included all Jews, who were formally classified as 'stateless', and those (old and new) Soviet citizens who refused to return to communist rule in their homelands.[9] These recalcitrants were soon joined by more than 160,000 Jews who left Poland between 1945 and 1947 due to continuing anti-Semitism, while in 1947 the majority of those leaving the Soviet bloc were

---

[8] SHAEF planning directive: refugees and displaced persons (DPs) (3 June 1944), Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Prisoners of War/Displaced Persons Division: Registered Files (PWDP and other Series), FO 1052/10, The National Archives, http://www.tlemea.com/postwareurope, accessed 23 November 2010; Louise W. Holborn, *The International Refugee Organisation: A specialized agency of the United Nations, its history and work, 1946-1952* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 395.
[9] Gerard Daniel Cohen, 'The Politics of Recognition: Jewish Refugees in Relief Policies and Human Rights Debates, 1945-1950', Immigrants & Minorities, 24, no. 2 (2006), 136.

Romanian Jews fleeing via Hungary and Austria.[10] 'Border-hoppers', usually young men from Czechoslovakia and Hungary, were also escaping the encroaching Iron Curtain.

Post-war Displaced Persons were thus joined by those who were soon broadly categorized as 'anti-communist political refugees'; by 1947, over a million people were in the care of UNRRA. This 'last million' was made up of around 400,000 Poles, 200,000 'Balts', 150,000 Ukrainians, 150,000 Jews from various regions, and then smaller groupings of nationalities including Yugoslavs and Hungarians.[11] The new International Refugee Organisation (IRO), founded by the United Nations (UN), was charged with resettling them. This resettlement mission was vehemently opposed by the Soviet Bloc; the IRO's remit was, indeed, 'bristling with political complications'.[12]

From 1948, the IRO funded migration to any country willing to accept the DPs. Most interested countries, including Canada and Argentina, were looking for young, healthy workers to regenerate post-war economies. The Soviet Union alleged that there was a 'real slave trade' going on; and that

---

[10] Arieh Kochavi, 'The Politics of Displaced Persons in Post-War Europe, 1945-1950', *Post-War Europe: Refugees, Exiles and Resettlement, 1945-1950,*
http://www.tlemea.com/postwareurope/essay6.asp, accessed 2 February 2010, 3.
[11] Gerard Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5.
[12] Patrick Murphy Malin, 'The Refugee: A Problem for International Organisation', *International Organisation*, 1, no. 3 (September 1947), 446; also see Paul Sendziuk in this volume, 'Forgotten People and Places: 'Stalin's Poles' in Persia, India and Africa, 1942-50', 21.

the IRO was the 'main purveyor of cheap labour for the capitalist countries'.[13]

There was also a strong racial and class-based component to the international community's selection criteria, with middle-class Balts seen as the "elite of the refugee problem".[14] Likewise, as Laura Hilton has pointed out, DP groups also exhibited agency, framing themselves in a particular way, to present a positive identity to potential settlement countries.[15] This usually involved the purposeful creation of a growing identity as staunch anti-communists, although some DPs also promoted their strong and healthy physique, as well as their devotion to established Christian religions. A Latvian DP publication went further, advertising that 60% of their population had fair hair and blue eyes.[16] One Lithuanian DP wrote to Australia that of course there was reason to fear an influx of 'jabbering dagoes', but that 'Balts' were 'disciplined, obedient, intelligent, sober, industrious, unassuming and of an appearance to match the English-Australian'.[17]

---

[13] V. Irinin, 'Slave Labour of Displaced Persons in the Capitalistic Countries', 27 October 1949, Department of Immigration, Central Office, IRO – International Refugee Organisation, 1947-1977, A446 1962/67355, National Archives of Australia (NAA), Canberra.

[14] A. W. H. Wilkinson, Foreign Office Refugee Department, cited in Cesarani, *Justice Delayed*, p. 74.

[15] Hilton, 'Cultural Nationalism', p. 286. Also played on legacy of guilt, 'Godless Communism', Hilton, 'How Anti-Communist Are You?', p. 1.

[16] Hilton, 'Cultural Nationalism', p. 316.

[17] Letter from H. L. Daumont to The Director, Current Affairs Bulletin, Commonwealth Office of Education, Sydney, 21 November 1948, Daumont, Harry Leslie - Admission under Displaced Persons Scheme - View on Assimilation of Migrants, Department of Immigration, Central Office, A434, 1949/3/487, NAA.

By 1947, then, the eligibility of DPs as both 'Displaced Persons' and 'refugees' had morphed into the 'selection, control and regimentation' of both the IRO and the international community on 'muscle-gathering missions'.[18] The DPs, who had earlier presented themselves to the IRO as Cold War 'political refugees', were now coerced into presenting themselves to fit recruiters' needs. For Canadian immigration authorities, intellectuals turned into lumberjacks, workers and farmers; for the United States, they became farmers and mechanics. Australia's new Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, decided that his first trip overseas would be to scope the DP camps for suitable migrants for Australia.[19]

The Australian Context

Australia's decision to take DPs had its genesis with the shock of war in the Pacific, which fostered an ambitious government imperative to dramatically increase population in Australia. In 1943 the government received a memo from Britain recognizing this need for increased migration to Australia for defence and national development, and suggesting that Australia look to Europe if there was a shortfall in migrants

---

[18] G. Daniel Cohen, 'The West and the Displaced, 1945-1951: The Post-War Roots of Political Refugees' (PhD thesis, New York University, January 2000), 171; Diana Kay and Robert Miles, *Refugees or Migrant Workers? European Volunteer Workers in Britain, 1946-1951* (London: Routledge, 1992), 63.
[19] Letter from Helen Ferber, Paris, 21 July 1947, Papers of Helen Ferber, 1937-2005, MS Acc06.027, NLA.

from the United Kingdom.[20] In late 1943 an interdepartmental committee was established to investigate and report specifically on immigration; a year later a sub-committee recommended that the 'Commonwealth should be prepared to accept *any white aliens* who can be assimilated and contribute satisfactorily to economic development and against whom there are no objections' (my emphasis).[21] It warned that 'Australia's need for population is so great that it cannot afford to be too exclusive as to categories to be regarded as eligible for admission'.[22]

Bolstered by the unifying experience of war, the idea that the Labor government could and should plan a radical new immigration program became an essential element of post-war 'reconstruction', particularly after the white paper *Full Employment in Australia* (May 1945) advocated entering a new phase of industrialization which would take the country beyond a reliance on rural exports to Britain.[23] Support for such a large-scale immigration program was bipartisan, and was also backed by

---

[20] Brian Murphy, *The Other Australia: Experiences of Migration* (Cambridge, UK: Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW, Cambridge University Press, 1993), 88; see also Jerzy Zubrzycki, 'Arthur Calwell and the Origin of Post-War Immigration', address given to the Migration Division Seminar, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Canberra, 6 October 1994, http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/doc/zubrzycki_1.pdf, accessed 26 November 2010.

[21] Sub-Committee on White Alien Immigration, 1944, cited in Glenda Sluga, 'Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre, 1947-1971' (MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1985), 11 ftn. 4.

[22] Suzanne Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora: two centuries of Jewish settlement in Australia* (Sydney, NSW: Collins, 1988), 226; see also Department of the Interior notes, 2 June 1941, cited in Josef Sestokas, *Welcome to Little Europe: Displaced Persons and the North Camp* (Sale, Vic: Little Chicken Publishing, 2010), 51.

[23] Janis Wilton and Richard Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australia: The Post-War Migrant Experience* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin Books Australia, 1984), 7; James Jupp, *Immigration* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), 102.

influential demographer W. D. Borrie.[24] A new Department of Immigration was established and in July 1945, Labor politician Arthur Calwell (already Minister for Information) lobbied to become the first Minister for Immigration.[25]

Calwell was a visionary who sought to remake Australia in America's (demographic) image; he ultimately became the architect of Australia's post-war mass migration program.[26] He set out his views in a personal manifesto published in 1945, *How Many Australians Tomorrow?,* which argued that Australia's population 'is our number one problem'. While admitting that immigration from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe was a 'controversial question', Calwell suggested 'we must be realistic'.[27]

Calwell's ostensible plan was to increase the population by 1% births and 1% net migration, with the public aim of 90% British migration in order to populate a strictly regulated White Australia. British migrants were however too few in the immediate post-war period, as there was little access to shipping and British citizens were in any case needed for post-

---

[24] Wilton and Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australia*, 21.
[25] Calwell, cited in Jerzy Zubrzycki, 'Arthur Calwell and the Origin of Post-War Immigration', 3; Graeme Freudenberg, 'Calwell, Arthur Augustus (1896-1973), Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/calwell-arthur-augustus-9667, accessed 12 January 2013.
[26] Interview with Rt. Hon. Arthur Calwell, Interviewer Mel Pratt, 25-28 May 1971, Oral TRC 121/7, NLA; Gwenda Tavan, 'Leadership, Arthur Calwell and the Post-War Immigration Program', *Australian Journal of History and Politics*, 58, no. 2 (June 2012), 210.
[27] Arthur A. Calwell, *How Many Australians Tomorrow?* (Melbourne: Reed & Harris, 1945), Multicultural Australia, http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/doc/calwell_2.pdf, accessed 12 September 2010.

war reconstruction in England.[28] The one million white American migrants optimistically invited into Australia, as well as ideal-type Scandinavian migrants, also failed to materialize.[29]

The Australian government was well aware of the 'last million' DPs languishing in Europe. Australia was a signatory and financial contributor to both UNRRA and the IRO. However, the Labor government was wary of non-British immigration and Australia had no refugee policy outside its ordinary migration requirements before its reluctant acceptance of 15,000 refugees was announced after the Evian Conference on Jewish refugees in 1938.[30] The government had gone as far as deporting 5,000 Asians and Pacific Islanders who had sought refuge in Australia during the war, some of whom had married Australian citizens.[31] Indeed, Australia's rejection of a plea by UNRRA in early 1947 to resettle 30,000 DPs was entirely in character. To the Australian public, the government made it very clear that

[28] A. Calwell, *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) / House of Representatives,* 15 October 1947, 762; Calwell's discussion with Addison, London, 1 July 1947, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government, http://www.info.dfat.gov.au/info/historical/histdocs.nsf/d30d79e4ab5621f9ca256c8600163c0d/6e795b8207932505ca256b7e00810af7?OpenDocument, accessed 4 July 2014; Press Release, 9 July 1947, Cabled from Bremen, Australian News and Information Bureau, Displaced Persons – Policy General (Chermside); Charles Wilmot, the representative in Australia of the British Council, cited in 'Migrant Pool: Britain's Shortage of Labour', West Australian, 12 January 1949.
[29] Letter from Migration Services, Social Activities Division, 15 September 1947, Department of Immigration, Central Office, Correspondence Files, IRO, 1962/67355, International Refugee Organisation 1947-1977, A446 1962/67355, NAA; *Daily Mirror* (London), 15 August 1947.
[30] Charles Price, 'Immigration Policies and Refugees in Australia', *International Migration Review*, 15, no. 1/2 (1981), 99; Klaus Neumann, *Refuge Australia: Australia's Humanitarian Record* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004), 19.
[31] Phillip Knightley, *Australia: A Biography of Nation* (London: Vintage, 2001), 217.

being a signatory of the IRO did not involve 'commitments to take refugees into the country, our freedom in this regard being unimpaired'.[32]

Machinations in the upper echelons of government told a different story. In late 1945 Calwell commissioned a Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Committee (CIAC), chaired by Labor MP Les Haylen and consisting of parliamentary representatives and delegates from employer and employee bodies, including the Australian Council of Trade Unions. After visiting Paris for an International Labour Office Conference and investigating immigration prospects in North-Western Europe, CIAC recommended that DPs should be recruited and actively assisted to migrate to Australia.[33]

In 1946 the Australian delegation to the UN received instructions from Calwell to secure representation on any body established to handle refugees, as Australia was 'interested from migration angle particularly'. This interest was to be kept secret. Thus, Australia even abstained in the General Assembly vote of 15 December 1946, which conditionally

---

[32] Cabinet Agendum No. 6950, Cabinet Secretary/Secretariat, Curtin, Forde and Chifley Ministries - folders of Cabinet minutes and agenda, Australian Participation in the International Refugee Organisation and Post-UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) Relief, A2700 695D, NAA; see also Letter from Under-Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Australia House, London, dated 18 March 1946, Resolution Adopted by the Economic and Social Council on Refugees and Displaced Persons; Article: 'Refugees Committee', Correspondence Files, Foreign Office, The National Archives (UK), Archives Unbound, http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/gdsc/i.do?&id=GALE%7CSC5107586960&v=2.1&u=usydem&it=r&p=GDSC&sw=w&viewtype=Manuscript, accessed 23 August 2014.
[33] Jerzy Zubrzycki, cited in Film Australia's Immigration DVD: Interview with Jerzy Zubrzycki, Questions by Paul Byrnes and Penelope McDonald (2004), http://www.filmaust.com.au/immigration/documents/faim_zubrzycki.pdf, accessed 19 January 2010, 2; John Lack and Jacqueline Templeton, *The Bold Experiment: A Documentary History of Australian Immigration Since 1945* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995), 21.

approved the establishment of the IRO.[34] However, by May 1947 Cabinet

had agreed to join the IRO (and Calwell later argued that membership of

the IRO conferred a 'definite responsibility for contributing to the situation

of the displaced persons problem').[35] As early as February 1947,

intimations had been made to the Intergovernmental Committee on

Refugees that an Australian delegation may be sent to the Occupied

Zones to 'draw up a list of skilled workers required in Australia' but that 'no

decision has yet been reached'.[36]

Chifley and Calwell seemed to be following a policy of never raising

migration issues in the Labor Caucus.[37] Historian Andrew Markus has

argued that Cabinet was 'misled (in all likelihood deliberately) and then

kept uninformed' by Chifley and Calwell with regard to the question of

Australia joining the IRO.[38] The only relevant Cabinet submission, from

April 1947, quotes from the Premier's Conference of 20 August 1946:

---

[34] Andrew Markus, 'Labour and Immigration 1946-49: The Displaced Persons Programme', *Labour History: A Journal of Labour and Social History*, no. 47 (1984), 77.

[35] Agendum No. 6950, 12 May 1947, Minutes of the Full Cabinet, with index - 16 January 1947 to 9 November 1949 - Chifley Ministry, A2703, Volume 4, NAA. See also Australian Participation in the International Refugee Organisation and Post-UNRRA Relief, Department of the Treasury and Department of External Affairs, Agendum No. 6950, 12 May 1947 and Memorandum for H.V. Evatt, Minister for External Affairs, 12 May 1947, Australian participation in the International Refugee Organisation and Post-UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) relief, Cabinet Office, A2700, 695D, NAA; A. Calwell, cited in *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) / House of Representatives,* 28 November 1947, 2922.

[36] Monthly Digest: No. 1., 10 February 1947, Inter-Governmental Committee On Refugees, 1944-51, JCRA General: Liaison*, The Henriques Collection, Wiener Library. Archives Unbound, http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/gdsc/i.do?&id=GALE%7CSC5107530865&v=2.1&u=usydem&it=r&p=GDSC&sw=w&viewtype=Manuscript>, accessed 23 August 2014.

[37] Jerzy Zubrzycki, cited in Film Australia's Immigration DVD: Interview with Jerzy Zubrzycki, 2; see also 17 May 1949, Minutes of the Full Cabinet, with index - 16 January 1947 to 9 November 1949 - Chifley Ministry, A2703, Volume 4, NAA, in which the Minister agrees to consult Cabinet 'from time to time' with 'regard to migration'.

[38] Markus, 'Labour and Immigration 1946-9', 77.

Australia has no direct interest from a purely migration point of view because:

(a)   Australia cannot take non-British migrants for some time.
(b)   Australia could arrange the selection of any desired migrants without participation in the IRO.
(c)   Australia is opposed to the principle of large scale settlement of refugees.[39]

However, on 2 June 1947 Calwell instructed an immigration official to prepare a report on the DPs available for migration.[40] It seems that by mid-1947, Chifley and Calwell were inclined, in a last-minute, opportunistic 'immigrant grab', to re-examine the prospects among the massive DP population.[41] Markus argued that this was a 'closely guarded secret perhaps shared only by Calwell, Chifley and Evatt'.[42]

Markus describes an atmosphere of 'secrecy and subterfuge'.[43] John Hirst, following Markus, has argued that Cabinet 'was not consulted for the very good reason that it would have opposed this move'.[44] However, the secrecy could perhaps more accurately be described as an 'in-house delegation', which signified the Prime Minister's fundamental trust in his

---

[39] Premier's Conference, 20 August 1946, cited in Agendum 1322: Australian Participation in the International Refugee Organisation, 16 April 1947, Department of External Affairs and Department of Immigration, for Full Cabinet, Australian Participation in the International Refugee Organisation, Secretary to Cabinet/Cabinet Secretariat, A2700, 1322, NAA.
[40] Markus, 'Labour and Immigration 1946-9', 77-78.
[41] Charles Price, *Australia and Refugees 1921-1976* (Canberra: 1990), 18; Neumann, *Refuge Australia*, 29.
[42] Markus, 'Labour and Immigration 1946-9', 78. The Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council and the Australian Military Mission in Berlin were also kept in the dark; see Sestokas, *Little Europe,* 84, and Despatches from Australian Military Mission, Berlin, Number 32/1947 (dated 10 April 1947) to Number 48/1947 (dated 30 September 1947), Department of Defence [III], Central Office, 37/301/337 Attachment 17, NAA.
[43] Jock Collins, *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land: Australia's Post-War Immigration* (Leichhardt, NSW: Pluto Press Australia, 1988), 54.
[44] John Hirst, 'Political Courage: Some Australian Examples', *The Monthly*, no. 25 (July 2007).

minister's vision and abilities.[45] Calwell later acknowledged Chifley's support, saying 'Had we had an anti-immigration man as prime minister, or a lukewarm one, we would still be a dull inbred country of predominantly British stock'.[46] In fact, on 15 June 1947 Chifley broached the subject at the Labor Party Conference, advising that 'every responsible politician or government official preparing immigration schemes knows he cannot be so choosy because there are neither British nor northern, southern or eastern Europeans in sufficient numbers to satisfy the world demand for immigrants'. Specifically, 'at present there is a pool of probably 1,500,000 people in Europe who desperately want to leave the Continent to start a new life'. Chifley warned that 'any country, including Australia, which wants immigrants must try to get them while the European export commodity exists'.[47] Three days later, Calwell flew to Europe to seek international assistance to obtain shipping and to approach the IRO about the possibility of recruiting migrants in European refugee camps.[48] This was widely reported in the press; newspaper reports of 4 July 1947 cited Chifley as asking Calwell to go to Europe to inspect camps of displaced

---

[45] Gwenda Tavan, 'Leadership: Arthur Calwell and the Post-War Immigration Program', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 58, no. 2 (June 2012), 209.

[46] Colm Kiernan, *Calwell: A Personal and Political Biography* (Thomas Nelson Australia, West Melbourne, Vic: 1978), 119. Noel Lamidey, Chief Migration Officer at Australia House, later described Chifley as a 'tower of strength' to Calwell. Noel Lamidey, *Partial Success: My Years as a Public Servant*, (N. W. Lamidey: Hunters Hill, NSW, 1970), 35.

[47] 'Chifley's Hundreds of Thousands – Europe hasn't enough migrants to go around', *Daily Telegraph*, 18 June 1947, cited in Sestokas, *Little Europe*, 79-80.

[48] Collins, *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land,* 54; Neumann, *Refuge Australia*, 29-30; see also S. Bennett, cited in Sestokas, *Little Europe*, 83.

persons to ascertain if there might be among them immigrants suitable for Australia.[49]

Calwell's first meeting in London was with representatives of the IRO.[50] His first continental stop was to a large DP camp at Bremerhaven to 'examine conditions firsthand'.[51] When Calwell met with representatives of the Preparatory Commission of the IRO (PCIRO), he was informed that there were 'high-quality' refugees available for resettlement and that shipping would be provided by the IRO; the Australian government would only be required to pay £10 per head as an *ex gratia* payment because of the greater distance to Australia compared to ships going to American destinations and elsewhere.[52] Not only were the potential migrants cheap, but they could be recruited using almost any selection criteria Calwell stipulated. In a press release from Bremen on 9 July, Calwell emphasized that the IRO would 'readily concede' 'complete selection rights' of the DPs,

---

[49] *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton), 5 July 1947; Minister will Seek Immigrant Ships Overseas, 19 June 1947, Publicity undertaken by the Department of Information for Department of Immigration, Department of Immigration, Central Office, A436, 1947/5/2588, NAA.

[50] Cablegram Calwell to Chifley, 30 June 1947, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government, http://www.info.dfat.gov.au/info/historical/HistDocs.nsf/(LookupVolNoNumber)/12~279, accessed 4 July 2014.

[51] Calwell Press Release, 8 July 1947, Cabled from Bremen, Australian News and Information Bureau, Displaced Persons – Policy General (Chermside).

[52] Calwell later negotiated with the IRO so that this £10 *ex gratia* payment was only paid for the first 50,000 DPs. Calwell Press Release, 18 July 1947, Cabled from Berlin, and Calwell Press Release, 22 July 1947, Cabled from Berlin, Australian News and Information Bureau, Displaced Persons – Policy General (Chermside); Meeting of Executive Committee and General Council Geneva, 18th October-26th October, 1951, International Refugee Organisation 1947-1977, IRO, Department of Immigration, Central Office, Correspondence Files, A446 1962/67355; Telegram from Army Melbourne to Army Berlin, 12 May 1950, George Vincent Greenhalgh, 1903-, Papers, 1947-1956, MS 8863, NLA (hereafter Greenhalgh Papers).

described by Calwell as 'chiefly Poles, Polish-Ukrainians, White Russians and Peterite Jugoslavs'.[53] Calwell telegrammed Chifley:

> Other countries are keen competitors for best migrant types and unless we act quickly we may lose our opportunity of security migrants on selection basis. I am sending 2 officers to make preliminary selection in DP camps of those classes of workers who can best assist our manpower shortages. We would select types specially suitable for rural work, nursing and domestic work in hospitals, labour for our reconstruction programme and developmental projects. Selection will be on general suitability for work to be performed, after IRO and British security have satisfied our medical and security requirements … Consider this by far most speedy and economical method of security best types of migrants required for Australia's economic rehabilitation from non-British sources in shortest possible time …[54]

Subsequent events suggested that although the 'best migrant types' according to Calwell's selection criteria soon became relatively scarce, apart from these there were more than enough DPs available to meet general requirements.[55] As one immigration official pointed out, the PCIRO representatives were selling to a very eager buyer, as Calwell had sensed a 'Target of Opportunity'.[56]

---

[53] Calwell Press Release, 9 July 1947, Cabled from Bremen, Australian News and Information Bureau, Displaced Persons – Policy General (Chermside).

[54] Kunz, *Displaced Persons*, 35.

[55] George Kiddle interviewed by Ann-Mari Jordens, Chief Migration Officers' Oral History Project, 2008, Oral TRC 5930/5, NLA.

[56] Unpublished manuscript by H G Brooks, 'Displaced Persons Volume 1: 1947', Papers (1933-1977) of Harland Gordon Brookes, 1920-1985, MS 8128, NLA.

Rather than being motivated by humanitarian considerations, Calwell was more interested in the DPs' contribution to Australia's 'population, specifically workforce' deficit.[57] As the Hobart *Mercury* later reported:

> Advice received in Canberra reveals that the irrepressible Arthur has decided that the risk of abuse about more refugees is less than the risk of failure of the works programme and admission of complete immigration deadlock.[58]

This was confirmed by Calwell in 1971:

> Primarily what I was interested in was the defence of Australia and its development, so that the people who had made this country and the descendants of those could be assured that they could live in peace and security. I was interested in – it would be wrong to say I was primarily interested in seeing that we gave a haven to oppressed peoples anywhere because we could have given a haven to all the displaced and distressed people in the world. We had an opportunity because of the desire of the Americans to remove displaced persons, that is people who were born in the Baltic states – Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians – we wanted to help them to get a new country and the Americans [IRO] were paying for it all and so it didn't cost us that very much …[59]

Calwell's pragmatic plan received swift approval from Chifley: 'Thanks for your telegram … I agree with action suggested … and approve you proceeding to Geneva to sign agreement'.[60] Calwell sent out a press release from Paris on 15 July advising that the Australian government would be signing an agreement with the IRO to take 'mostly … people

---

[57] There is some debate surrounding Calwell's humanitarian intent, based on his strong religious faith; see James Franklin, 'Calwell, Catholicism and the Origins of Multicultural Australia', *Catholics in Australian Public Life Since 1788*, Australian Catholic Historical Society 2009 Conference, 41-55; Neumann, *Refuge Australia*, 32; Arthur A. Calwell interviewed by Hazel de Berg for the Hazel de Berg Collection, 1967, OH-VN457229, NLA; Les Haylen, cited in *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) / House of Representatives,* 15 October 1947, 755.

[58] 'The Flow Had To Begin Somehow', *The Mercury* (Hobart, Tas), 26 July 1947.

[59] Interview with Rt. Hon. Arthur Calwell, Interviewer Mel Pratt, 25-28 May 1971, Oral TRC 121/7, NLA.

[60] Markus, 'Labour and Immigration 1946-9', 78.

from the Baltic countries', who would be 'selected individually'.[61] The agreement, a radical departure in Australian immigration, was signed with the PCIRO on 21 July 1947.

DP Recruitment / Selection

In the agreement signed with the PCIRO, Australia initially agreed to resettle 4,000 DPs in 1947 and then 12,000 DPs per year over three years 'provided the Australian government can select the DPs *individually* and provided the IRO can provide shipping' (my emphasis).[62] The success of the program led to the numbers being raised in November 1947 to 20,000 per year, and then in July 1948 Calwell announced that Australia would accept a total of up to 200,000 DPs 'as rapidly as possibly'.[63] These DPs were to come to Australia under a two-year indentured labour program, the men as 'labourers' and the women as 'domestics', but with a view towards permanent settlement.[64] The IRO's press release explicitly stated that Australia wanted 'principally "horny-handed sons of toil"'.[65]

---

[61] Calwell Press Release, 15 July 1947, Cabled from Paris, Australian News and Information Bureau, Displaced Persons – Policy General (Chermside).

[62] IRO Press Release dated 23 July 1947, Immigration – Displaced Persons – General, IRO [International Refugee Organisation] Agreement, Department of Information, Central Office, Correspondence Files, CP 815/1, 021.114 (herafter IRO Agreement); see also Calwell Press Release, 18 July 1947, Cabled from Berlin, Australian News and Information Bureau, Displaced Persons – Policy General (Chermside).

[63] United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948, vol. VI, *The Far East and Australasia,* 3, http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1948v06.p0017&id=FRUS.FRUS1948v06&isize=M, accessed 28 August 2014.

[64] The initial 'one year' included in the IRO Agreement and subsequent 'up to two years' of the contract was soon interpreted unilaterally as, and later substituted into, two years. Calwell had specifically advised 'two years' of a work indenture program in his initial press releases regarding

The new Immigration Department sent its own officers and medical staff to the DP camps to work with IRO camp officers selecting DPs for migration to Australia. DPs were actively recruited by the Australian teams. Australia was to be sold as a welcoming, exciting destination, with migrant workers being 'invited to share our life in the best country in the world'.[66] A preliminary advisory committee recommended: 'We can capture their imagination by full employment and vast ventures needing men and women for the development of the country'.[67]

Australian officers were competing with other settlement countries, including, by 1948, the United States, and wanting to skim the 'cream';[68] the most important selection category for Australia was race. Specifically, the issue was upholding White Australian immigration policies, and for the government to be seen to be upholding these restrictive policies, to

the new immigration scheme and then sent specific instructions in January 1948 to representatives in Berlin changing the period from one year to two, with qualifications. Calwell Press Release, 15 July 1947, Cabled from Paris and Calwell Press Release, 18 July 1947, Cabled from Berlin, Australian News and Information Bureau, Displaced Persons – Policy General (Chermside); (PC)IRO Agreement with Australia dated 21 July 1947, 2, Immigration - Displaced Persons - General, IRO Agreement; Memorandum from Department of Immigration to Defence Secretariat, 23 January 1948, Displaced Persons Employment Opportunities Policy Part 1, Department of Immigration, Central Office, A445, 179/9/3, NAA; Kunz, *Displaced Persons*, 41.

[65] IRO Press Release, 21 July 1947, Immigration – IRO Agreement, 1947-1948; see also Calwell Press Release, 18 July 1947, Cabled from Berlin, Australian News and Information Bureau, Displaced Persons – Policy General (Chermside).

[66] A. Calwell, *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) / House of Representatives,* 3 October 1947, 483. Regarding Australian recruitment practices in the DP camps, see Ruth Balint, 'Industry and Sunshine: Australia as Home in the Displaced Persons Camps of Post-War Europe', *History Australia*, 11, no. 1 (2014), 102-107.

[67] *Report of the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Committee: Presented 27th February 1946,* Canberra, 1946, cited in Lack and Templeton, *Bold Experiment*, 21-22.

[68] IRO, 'The Facts About Refugees', 15 September 1948, 24, IRO – International Refugee Organisation, 1947-1977, Department of Immigration, Central Office, A446, 1962/67355, NAA.

prevent domestic 'political repercussions'.[69] However, White Australia was becoming an anachronism in the context of a new international discourse of racial equality and universal human rights promoted by the United Nations.[70] The Australian government had to tread a thin line between (populist) national and (liberal) international condemnation and attempted to do this by only allowing what were deemed 'assimilable' 'racial' and cultural types into Australia.[71] In other words, if Australia couldn't attract enough British migrants, then 'white' migrants who could potentially assimilate would be an option taken by the government to fulfil its economic and population aims, as well as neatly fitting into an ostensibly humanitarian international program.[72]

Mirroring the prejudices of other settlement countries, the DPs were graded on a quasi-official hierarchy, with 'Balts' at the top and 'Jews' at the bottom. As Glenda Sluga has noted, Eastern Europeans had not yet been definitively 'racially' categorized, and it was therefore easier to blur

---

[69] Noel Lamidey, Chief Migration Officer, Australia House, cited in Suzanne Rutland, 'The History of Australian Jewry, 1945-1960' (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1990).

[70] Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2008), 339, 343.

[71] Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, 352; see also Zubrzycki, 'Arthur Calwell and the Origin of Post-War Immigration', 8; Anna Haebich, *Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950-1970* (Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Press, 2008), 11; see also Glenda Sluga, 'Altered States and Subjectivities', *Melbourne Historical Journal,* 37 (2009), 3.

[72] For a discussion of 'whiteness' as a constructed identity, see Catriona Elder, Cath Ellis and Angela Pratt, 'Whiteness in Constructions of Australian Nationhood: Indigenes, Immigrants and Governmentality', in Aileen Moreton-Robinson (ed.), *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004), 208-221.

the lines of their identity.[73] In contrast, Clune had described the Soviet Union as a regime of 'cruel Asiatic brutalities'.[74]

Representations of race were important not only in the selections of DPs, but also in the presentation of the DP scheme to the Australian public. Egon Kunz has posited that one factor in the government's earlier rejection of DPs may have been because of the impression held that the DPs were predominantly Jewish.[75] The government had no intention of accepting large numbers of Jewish refugees due to a perceived 'non-assimilability'; Calwell stated to the IRO: 'We are not anti-Semitic but we will have to handle this matter carefully'.[76] There were (necessarily feeble) protests from the IRO, and also from Jewish organisations and within the DP camps themselves, but to no avail.[77] Australian representatives argued that Australia had had some trouble with Jews, and that 'Balts' were preferred 'because they are people who are easily assimilated'.[78] A memo from the Head of Australian Military Mission in Germany in June

---

[73] Rutland, 'Subtle Exclusions', 62; Sluga, 'Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre', 22 ftn. 5.
[74] Clune, *All Roads Lead to Rome*, 40.
[75] Kunz, *Displaced Persons*, 17; see also Statement by the Minister for Immigration, the Hon. Arthur A. Calwell, 23 January 1947, Statement of 23 January 1947 [by Arthur Calwell, Minister for Immigration] on arrivals in Australia during 1946 [Refugees and Displaced Persons], including Jewish, Department of Immigration, Central Office, A434, 1947/3/4805, NAA; see also Publicity Needs in Australia for IRO and the Displaced Persons Migrants, Immigration - Displaced Persons – General, Department of Information, Central Officer, CP815/1, 021.134.
[76] Memorandum, Department of the Interior, 11 May 1939, Admission of Jews Policy Part 3, Correspondence Files, Department of Immigration, A445, 235/5/4; Conference on Displaced Persons, 18 July, with British Control Commission Officials in Berlin, Minister's Visit to Europe – Report on, 1947, Department of Immigration, Central Office, Correspondence Files, A438 1949/7/1067.
[77] Markus, 'Labour and Immigration 1946-9', 80; Suzanne Rutland and Sol Encel, 'No room at the inn: American responses to Australian immigration policies, 1946-1954', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 43, no. 5 (2009), 513.
[78] Rutland, 'Subtle Exclusions', 56-57.

1947 encapsulates the advice regarding the 'very good types' available in the DP camps at that time: 'Balts' were the 'best material'; Poles would need to be carefully selected to obtain 'assimilable types'; while 'Yugoslavs' would 'no doubt be worth some consideration'.[79]

The agreement signed by Calwell included the IRO proviso that the DPs would be selected 'without discrimination as to race and religion' or marital status.[80] Calwell publicly declared: 'Our policy has no race prejudice. All we ask of DPs is that they be of good faith, good character and willing to work'.[81] However, Australian Helen Ferber, who worked as a public information officer for the Displaced Persons Headquarters of UNRRA in Paris from March 1947, in conversation with Calwell in July 1947, recorded that Calwell said Australia wanted 'Latvians': 'It came out in later conversation that he had seen some nice blond Latvians at Bremen, and well, they were blond and Chifley like them blond'.[82] Calwell stated publicly that 'the Baltic people will have preference over other nationals' as

---

[79] Immigrants for Australia, Berlin Dispatch No. 46/47, 26 June 1947, from Australian Military Mission, Berlin to Department of Defence and Department of External Affairs, Despatches from Australian Military Mission, Berlin - (New Series) - Number 32/1947 (dated 10 April 1947) to Number 48/1947 (dated 30 September 1947), Department of Defence [III] Central Office, A816, 37301/337 Attachment 17, NAA.

[80] (PC)IRO Agreement with Australia dated 21 July 1947, 2, Immigration - Displaced Persons - General, IRO Agreement.

[81] Markus, 'Labour and Immigration 1946-9', 80.

[82] Helen Ferber, letter dated 21 July 1947, Letters from Paris and Geneva March 1947-November 1947, Papers of Helen Ferber, MS 9740, NLA.

he assured Australians that 'while in Europe, I was impressed by the bearing, the physique and the general industry of the Balts'.[83]

The Australian medical officers working in Europe seemed overly concerned with noting 'racial' characteristics and, as Clune reported one of the selectors saying, this was because: 'We have to live alongside these people when we go back to Aussie'.[84] One noted that 'Baltic' 'men are often blonde and tanned and would on appearance do justice to a Manly Surf Team'. He thought, however, that some with a 'less than average intellectual standard', particularly Ukrainian women, would be only 'good hewers of wood and drawers of water'.[85] Another medical officer wrote in 1949: 'We are still getting a fair quota of Balts and they are probably the best too. I am seeing quite a lot of Ukrainians now also – they seem pretty dumb, but I dare say that they will make good workers …'[86]

It was immediately clear to observers that the Australian officials, in the words of historian Mark Wyman, 'moved cautiously among the camp

---

[83] Calwell Press Release, 18 July 1947, Cabled from Berlin, Australian News and Information Bureau, Displaced Persons – Policy General (Chermside); IRO Press Release dated 23 July 1947 and Australian Department of Information Press Release dated 13 October 1947, Immigration - Displaced Persons - General, IRO Agreement.

[84] Clune, *All Roads Lead to Rome*, 178.

[85] Letter from M. Stewart, Senior Medical Officer, Australian Military Mission, to Head, Australian Military Mission, 18 June 1946, Medical – Displaced Persons. Policy and Procedure in regard to Migrants and Applicants, for Landing Permits, A445, 200/1/5, NAA (hereafter Medical – Displaced Persons).

[86] Ibid., Letter from Dr Cameron, Australian MO with the Selection Committee in Germany, to Dr Walker, Bonegilla, 1949.

inhabitants, picking blue-eyed, blond DPs less likely to offend native-born Australians'.[87] They were instructed by Calwell to 'hand-pick' a 'choice sample' for the first shipments: young, single, healthy, educated 'ideal types', preferably male, fair-haired, fair-skinned and with blue eyes.[88] The 'clear ethnic picking order' was deliberate. Selection officer George Kiddle, an ex-RAAF serviceman who became one the first migration officers, later recalled:

> Our instructions were to take displaced persons from the Baltic states only for the first ship. That is Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia … We tried to pick … good, decent-looking people … appearance very much so ... We've got to make sure they look very impressive … we've got to pick people that look attractive to the Australian population … we tried to make the first ship particularly impressive.[89]

As a result, early selections were made only from young, single Baltic, Ukrainian, Yugoslavian and Czech DPs, 'based on personal appearance and favourable impressions'.[90] As Calwell noted to the press: 'Aged and queerly cut clothes and European styles of haircut could not disguise the quality of human material'.[91] These first rigorously selected DPs acted as the scheme's 'Trojan horse', as strict racial selection criteria was soon

[87] Mark Wyman, *DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-51* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 191.
[88] Barbara E Bryan, 'Recalcitrant Women? The Effects of Immigration Policies on Displaced Persons Women 1948-1952' (MA thesis, Griffith University, 1996), 15; Calwell, *Be Just and Fear Not*, 103; M. L. Kovacs, 'Immigration and Assimilation: An Outline Account of the IRO Immigrants in Australia' (MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1955), 193.
[89] George Kiddle Interviewed by Ann-Mari Jordens, 2008, Chief Migration Officers' Oral History Project, 5930-0005, NLA.
[90] Rutland, 'Subtle Exclusions', 57; George Kiddle, 'The first party of displaced persons – November 1947', *Post Migration*, no. 100 (Aug 1995), 16.
[91] Press Statement by the Minister for Immigration, the Honourable Arthur A. Calwell dated 7 November 1947, Displaced Persons – Policy General (Chermside).

relaxed in the race to populate Australia cheaply.[92] Individual national groups were progressively permitted: Slovenes, Ukrainians, Yugoslavs, Czechs, single Poles, Hungarians, White Russians, Poles with families, Albanians, Romanians, Bulgarians, and then in May 1949, ostensibly all IRO-categorised Displaced Persons. These DPs also included Poles, Yugoslavs and White Russian refugees who found themselves in East Africa, Greece, Lebanon, Egypt and the Philippines.[93] Approximately 5,000 German and Austrian-born wives of DPs were also permitted to migrate to Australia, as according to German law they had assumed the nationality of their husbands upon marriage.[94]

Relaxation of 'racial' criteria did not, however, extend to Jews. Official feeling seemed to be, as expressed by one Australian immigration official: 'We have never wanted these people and we still don't want them'.[95] Policy on the matter was made clear in an instruction to Berlin in June 1949: 'The term refers to race and not to religion and the fact that some DPs who are Jewish by race have become Christian by religion is not relevant'.[96] Interestingly, 'race' was also more important than 'religion' in the case of a few Russian and Romanian Muslims who were part of the

---

[92] Neumann, *Refuge Australia*, p. 33; Adam Wells (Executive Producer), 'Immigration Nation' (SBS TV: 2011).

[93] Kunz, *Displaced Persons*, 45; Holborn, *The International Refugee Organisation*, 395.

[94] Kunz, *Displaced Persons,* 45.

[95] Suzanne D. Rutland, 'Sanctuary for Whom? Jewish Victims and Nazi Perpetrators in Post-War Australian Migrant Camps', Conference Paper, Beyond Camps and Forced Labour, The Second International Multidisciplinary Conference at the Imperial War Museum, London, 11-13 January 2006', 28.

[96] Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, 407; see also Selection of Jewish Applicants Under the Mass Movement, Australia, Greenhalgh Papers.

DP cohort in Australia.[97] As a member of the Australian selection team commented: 'Hitler could not have done better'.[98]

In Australia, as in other settlement countries, the issue of race tied in neatly with that of politics. As Suzanne Rutland has noted, the preferred racial type of the anticommunist and/or pro-German 'Baltic' DP also happened to be the preferred political type.[99] This led to a laxity in the political screening process, whereby Nazi collaborators and fascist sympathisers, as well as members of right-wing groups such as the Serbian Chetniks and Croatian Ustashi, were able to migrate to Australia under the same conditions of 'Cold War myopia' operating in other Western countries.[100] Other DPs were members of groups such as the far-right Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations, which was anti-Soviet, anti-Semitic, and dominated by radical nationalists, including ex-Nazis. On the other hand, many DPs were anti-Soviet but not necessarily anticommunist. And

[97] Bruce Pennay, 'Selling Immigration', *Context*, National Trust of Australia (NSW), Sydney (June 2007), 6. Although it should be noted that Jehovah's Witnesses, banned in Australia in 1942 by the Menzies Government, were not welcomed as DPs; see French Zone: Jehovah's Witnesses, 24 February 1949, Australian Military Mission Berlin] Migration - Security – General, Australian Military Mission to Allied Control Council for Germany and Austria/Allied High Commission/Federal Republic of Germany [West Berlin], A9306, 355/1, NAA.
[98] Cited in Rutland, 'Subtle Exclusions', 58; see also Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, 'The Displaced Persons Problem: Repatriation and Resettlement' in *European Immigrants in Britain, 1933-1950*, Johannes-Dieter Steinert and Inge Weber-Newth (eds) (Munich: Saur, 2003), 146.
[99] Rutland, 'Sanctuary for Whom?', 25 ; see also Jan-Hinnerk Antons, 'Displaced Persons in Post-War Germany: Parallel Societies in a Hostile Environment', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 49 (2014), 104, and Haim Genizi, *America's Fair Share: The Admission and Resettlement of Displaced Persons, 1945-1952* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 23.
[100] Cohen, 'The West and the Displaced', 2. See, for example, M M Alagich, 'Croations', in James Jupp, ed., *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins* (North Ryde, NSW: Angus & Robertson Publishers, 1988), 337.

of course, there were also allegations that Soviet agents entered Australia posing as DPs.[101]

The Australian selection teams were inexperienced in European languages and geo-politics, as indeed was the Australian government, characterized by Helen Ferber as 'innocents abroad'.[102] The selection teams were thus dependent on interpreters and 'cursory' or flawed intelligence from IRO and foreign sources.[103] The teams operated with minimal instruction from Canberra on the issue of politics in the selection process. While given criteria listing the nationalities acceptable to Australia and the restrictions on Jews, there was no formal policy for the exclusion of Nazi collaborators from Eastern Europe and no information provided about the various institutions of collaboration.[104] In fact, Jews were discriminated against twice – firstly because of their 'race' and then because of allegations that many were 'Communist Agents'.[105] Likewise,

---

[101] See, for example, Immigration Minister Harold Holt's assertion that 'only one migrant had been sent back to Europe for political reasons. He was a Communist organiser.' Holt, cited in 'False Reports of Nazis Here', *Sunday Telegraph*, 1 April 1951, Suggestion that DPs of undesirable character have been admitted in Australia [Box 45], Commonwealth Investigation Service, NSW, SP1714/1, N47738; see also A. C. Menzies, *Review of Material relating to the Entry of Suspected War Criminals into Australia,* 1986 and V. L. Borin, *The Uprooted Survive: A Tale of Two Continents* (London: William Heinemann, 1959), 265.

[102] Helen Ferber, letter dated 21 July 1947, Letters from Paris and Geneva March 1947-November 1947, Papers of Helen Ferber, MS 9740, NLA.

[103] Carol Mather, *Aftermath of War: Everyone Must Go Home* (London: Brassey's (UK), 1992), p 191; see also Mr Andrew Metcalfe, Secretary, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 'Celebration of 65 years of post-war migration to Australia' (2 July 2010), http://www.immi.gov.au/about/speeches-pres/_pdf/2010-07-02-australia-house-65-years-postwar-migration.pdf, accessed 26 November 2010; Rutland, 'Sanctuary for Whom?', 24-25; George Kiddle Interviewed by Ann-Mari Jordens, 2008, Chief Migration Officers' Oral History Project, 5930-0005, NLA

[104] Kiddle, 'The First Party of Displaced Persons – November 1947', 16.

[105] Minutes of Conference held at Cologne, 17-18 December 1948, Papers of George Vincent Greenhalgh, 1903-, 1947-1956, MS 8863, NLA.

the mainly left-wing Spanish refugees from Franco were perhaps ruled out of the Australian scheme due to both race and politics.[106]

Although Calwell had specifically recommended as 'absolutely essential' the appointment of an Australian Military Officer to carry out political security checks, this matter of security was soon sidelined.[107] In practice, Australian officials simply assumed that the IRO had screened all DPs effectively, and throughout the IRO scheme relied on US and British officials for intelligence information.[108] IRO sources, however, were generally unreliable, with Nazi collaborators infiltrating the screening process at every level.[109] In fact, as Mark Aarons has convincingly shown, 'many in Western intelligence came to regard yesterday's Nazi war criminals and collaborators as today's potential freedom fighters'.[110] Evidence has emerged that in some cases British officials actively

---

[106] Mark Aarons, *Sanctuary: Nazi Fugitives in Australia* (Port Melbourne, Vic: William Heinemann Australia, 1989), 110; Markus, 'Labour and Immigration 1946-49', 80.

[107] Cablegram Calwell to Chifley, London, 18 July 1947, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government, http://www.info.dfat.gov.au/info/historical/HistDocs.nsf/d30d79e4ab5621f9ca256c8600163c0d/07b9d2acf90d70e7ca256b7e00810c07?OpenDocument, accessed 31 August 2014; see Menzies, *Review*, 37, and Aarons, *Sanctuary*, 91.

[108] Memorandum from Brigadier F. G. Galleghan to Secretary to Immigration, 11 August 1949, Article in Washington Post – 10 August 1949 – Australia puts United States Displaced Persons Mission to Shame, Department of Immigration, Central Office, A434, 1949/3/8754; Memorandum to the Director, Military Intelligence, Army Headquarters, Melbourne, from T. H. E. Heyes, Secretary of the Department of Immigration, 17 August 1950, Admission of Poles [Polish displaced persons] from East Africa [also reports of migrant selection missions to Middle East, Greece, East Africa], Department of Immigration, Central Office, A445, 255/1/4; see also Menzies, Review, 47; 'Displaced Persons: Migrants to Australia: No Communistic Tendencies', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 13 June 1949, 4.

[109] Rutland, 'Sanctuary for Whom?', 25; Jane Cadzow, 'Another Time, Another Place', Good Weekend, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 June 2008, 27.

[110] Aarons, *Sanctuary*, xxv.

concealed intelligence from Australia in order to allow anti-communist war criminals to migrate under the IRO scheme.[111] Further, any evidence as to war crimes presented by the communist states was simply ignored, as was any subsequent information reported in Australia.[112] When the Jewish Council brought concerns about the presence of alleged Nazi collaborators within the DP scheme, Chifley is reported to have joked: 'When these Baltic women get into bed with Australians they'll forget all that'.[113] Calwell further ignored his own security service, dismissing their evidence regarding the SS origins of some DPs as a 'farrago of nonsense'.[114]

The Australian government's emphasis on ideal 'racial', age and gender types were far more important to a parochial White Australia suffering from a labour shortage than political affiliation; and any involvement in war-time atrocities was less important than a general perception of DP assimilability, and ability to labour.[115] The Australian selection teams were primarily interested in recruiting young, strong, healthy, male labourers for

---

[111] Aarons, *Sanctuary*, 35, 46; Cesarani, *Justice Delayed*, 182.

[112] M. M. Alagich, 'Croations', 337; 'False Reports of Nazis Here', *Sunday Telegraph*, 1 April 1951.

[113] Philip Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis and Communists Down Under: The Jewish Council's Controversial Campaign Against German Immigration', *Australian Historical Studies*, 33, no. 119 (April 2002), 79.

[114] Ibid., 78.

[115] Ibid., 88; see also Minutes of Conference held at Cologne, 17-18 December 1948, Greenhalgh Papers.

industrial and agricultural work.[116] The average age of the first shipload of 'beautiful Balts' was 23 years.[117] Such an age and gender-specific policy was enabled by initial regulations that family groups with dependants (particularly aged dependants) and single men or married couples with children over the age of 45, or single women or childless married couples over the age of 40, were not permitted.[118] The Australia government plan was to import a workforce, not give succor to refugee dependants.[119] Selection teams were thus instructed to recruit 60 or 70 workers per every 100 migrants.[120]

The DPs had to be perfectly healthy, both physically and mentally, as Calwell wanted 'the best that is in the field'.[121] Medical officers were warned to look out for 'impersonation methods', including 'switching of x-rays and personal substitution', as well as 'bribes and threats'.[122] Doctors were instructed to reject those presenting with minor complaints such as varicose veins and tinea, as the DPs may be able to 'utilise these disabilities to claim unfitness for work in particular localities or particular

---

[116] Calwell Press Release, 18 July 1947, Cabled from Berlin, Australian News and Information Bureau, and *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 26 September 1947, Displaced Persons – Policy General (Chermside).
[117] Bruce Pennay, *The Young at Bonegilla: Receiving Young Immigrants at Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre, 1947-71* (Wodonga: Parklands Albury-Wodonga, 2010), 1.
[118] Holborn, *The International Refugee Organisation*, 393.
[119] Script of Interview broadcast over United Nation Radio on 10th October 1949, Publicity – Displaced Persons, Department of Immigration, Central Office, Correspondence Files, A438, 1949/7/926, NAA.
[120] Operating Instruction No. 71 of 19/06/50, cited in Neumann, *Refuge Australia*, 32-33; Telegram from Army Melbourne to Amber Berlin, 12 May 1950, Greenhalgh Papers.
[121] Letter from Calwell to Dr Andrew, Australian Military Mission, dated 2 September 1949, Medical – Displaced Persons.
[106] Ibid., Medical Selection of European Displaced Persons as 'New Australians': A Guide for Medical Officers, 12.

jobs'.[123] Medical tests also searched for sexually transmitted diseases, while officers were instructed that 'women of child-bearing age should be capable of bearing children'.[124] Chifley later lauded the 'virility' of the young DPs, which was a selling point in the 'Populate or Perish' argument.[125]

By late 1948 these strict policies became unworkable as "'bodies' had to be found" to fill ships and the principle of 'net gain' became attractive.[126] As well as 'good and willing workers', Australia needed 'prospective breeders'.[127] Thus, larger family groups were now permitted to enter Australia, as well as 'widows, deserted wives and unmarried mothers with children'.[128] After several years of pressure both from within Australia and from the IRO, some sick parents or close relatives labeled as 'sub-

---

[123] Ibid., Memorandum of A. J. Metcalfe, Director-General of Health, dated 1 February 1949.
[124] Ibid., Medical Selection of European Displaced Persons as 'New Australians': A Guide for Medical Officers, 19.
[125] Chifley, cited in the *Advertiser*, 5 May 1949; see also Transcript of an interview between Mr Smith of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and Dr Ross-Smith of IRO and Transcript of an interview between Mr Keith Smith of Australian Broadcasting Corporation and Selection Officer, Mr Holland, Greenhalgh Papers.
[126] Rutland, 'Sanctuary for Whom?', 23; Kunz, *Displaced Persons*, 47; Neumann, *Refuge Australia*, 33; see also Letter from T.H.E. Heyes, Secretary, Department of Immigration to Immigration Publicity Officer, Department of Information dated 29 April 1949, Immigration – DPs – General, Department of Information, Central Office, Correspondence Files, CP 815/1, 021.134, NAA.
[127] Letter from M. Stewart, Senior Medical Officer, Australian Military Mission, to Head, Australian Military Mission, 18 June 1946, Medical – Displaced Persons; Minutes of Conference held at Cologne, 7-18 December 1948, Greenhalgh Papers.
[128] There was an idea originating from the Australian Military Mission in Cologne at this time that 'a good many of the [unmarried] women will be prepared to place their children in [an orphanage] and let them be adopted by Australians'. Letter from T.H.E. Heyes, Secretary, Department of Immigration to Immigration Publicity Officer, Department of Information, Report on Visit to Australia by IRO Representative dated January 1949, , Immigration – DPs – General, Department of Information, Central Office, Correspondence Files, CP 815/1, 021.134, NAA; Letter from G.V. Greenhalgh, Chief Migration Officer, Australian Military Mission, Cologne, to Major-General F.G. Galleghan, Head of the Australian Military Mission, Berlin, 25 March 1949, Greenhalgh Papers.

standard' medically (part of the DP 'hard-core') were also accepted.[129] Even in the last year of the scheme, humanitarian motivations were not behind decisions of the selection teams. As one selection officer argued: 'We are getting to the "bottom of the barrel" now, and why should Australia take all those whom other countries would not have?' He did not want to see 'Australia becoming the dumping-ground for undesirables whom no one else would take'.[130]

In all, 170,700 DPs arrived in Australia between 1947 and 1952 through the auspices of the IRO. The main national groups were Polish (63,393), 'Baltic' (34,656), Yugoslav (23,543), Ukrainian (14,464), Hungarian (11,919) and Czechoslovak (9,142). Upon arrival, these DPs were sent to reception camps to be processed, and to learn English and about the 'Australian Way of Life'. They were then assigned to placements for a compulsory two-year work contract, with little attempt to match up qualifications or prior experience with job vacancies, and no attempt to keep family groups together.[131] The DPs were sent as unskilled labour, essentially indentured labour, to heavy industry, public utilities including projects such as the Snowy Mountains Scheme, agricultural work, and domestic and hospital work. Clune advised:

---

[129] Letter from H. G. Andrew, Senior Medical Officer, Australian Military Mission, to Director General of Health, Canberra, dated 28 December 1949, Medical – Displaced Persons.

[130] Letter from Victor E. Lederer, Australian Military Mission, Austria, to G.V. Greenhalgh, Chief Migration Officer, Australian Military Mission, Cologne, 14 September 1949, Greenhalgh Papers.

[131] See Ruth Balint in this volume, "'To Reunite the Dispersed Family': War, Displacement and Migration in the tracing files of the Australian Red Cross", 3.

That 'Balt' who is 'working for the Council', chipping weeds on the footpath in front of your house, may have been a Professor of Philosophy in Lithuania, a poet of renown in Poland, a bank-manager in Prague, or a Cabinet Minister in Latvia. He probably speaks seven languages, and now is learning English. Give him a chance, he'll 'come good'.

Australia had, ostensibly successfully, re-branded the DPs as 'New Australians', racially and politically acceptable, and useful as pliable labour and a source of population growth.