"An Isolated Outpost of Western Civilization": Geopolitics, Security, Population and Race in Russell's Appraisal of mid-Century Australia.

I. Introduction: Russell the Visiting Dyason Lecturer

From June to August 1950, Russell spent nine weeks touring Australia at the invitation of the E.C. Dyason Trust and the Australian Institute for International Affairs (AIIA). He travelled to every state bar Tasmania and spoke publicly to capacity crowds in Sydney, Brisbane, Canberra, Adelaide and Perth, as well as addressing state branches of the AIIA in smaller, semi-private gatherings.[1] The mission of the Dyason Lectures was to "foster in Australia a greater understanding of its situation in the world".[2] Russell endeavoured to fulfil this mandate not as an expert analyst of a country with which he was only superficially acquainted, but more indirectly. In Sydney he delivered a short series of lectures on world government, or, more accurately, on three formidable obstacles to its attainment: unchecked population growth, racial hatred and ideological polarization. In Melbourne he turned to the perplexities of "Life in the Atomic Age"—not only the strategic and diplomatic dimensions, but also the psychological burdens of the nuclear peril and the attendant risks of frivolity, fanaticism and despair—"states of mind which must be avoided". In both these state capitals and in the three others on his itinerary, plus Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory, Russell also dissected the social and political tumult of post-war Asia and (after completing the New South Wales leg of his tour) presented a standalone compendium of his Sydney world government triptych.[3]

Broadly speaking, Russell's material tended towards more general discussion of contemporary problems—superpower rivalries, nuclear weapons, anti-colonial revolts—as opposed to the particular bearing of such issues on his host nation. Yet it was almost inevitable that Russell should have been

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[1] He also made an unscheduled presentation of one lecture, "Obstacles to World Government", in the small town of Cairns on the Great Barrier Reef during a short expedition to northern Queensland (14–16 July), as well as giving philosophy seminars (mainly on non-deductive inference) at the Universities of Sydney, Melbourne and Western Australia (see RA REC. ACQ. 313 for notes from the Sydney sessions taken by eminent Australian realist John Anderson, holder of the Challis chair in philosophy in that department).

[2] Quoted in Griffin *1974–75*, 3. Russell was the second overseas scholar invited to Australia by E.C. Dyason, a wealthy Australian mining engineer turned stockbroker who had been living in London since 1947 (and before that, in Argentina). The American philosopher F.S.C. Northrop had become the inaugural Dyason Lecturer in 1949. Dyason was probably the unnamed "Australian" with whom Russell's pocket diary noted an appointment for 5 February 1949. When Dyason died suddenly that October, arrangements for bringing Russell to Australia were still unsettled. Although an E.C. Dyason Trust had been established in 1942 for scholarly purposes (to investigate the "psychology of conflict"), the Dyason Lectures were not yet endowed and funds had to be released from the businessman's substantial estate before Russell's tour could proceed (Russell was to be paid £600 sterling plus expenses.) The preparatory work had already been delegated to the AIIA, an organization (part think-tank, part public educator) which Dyason had helped establish in 1933 and of which he remained a generous patron (see Legge *1999*, 1–2).

[3] See, respectively, Papers **11a** ("I. Institutions"), **11b** (II. "Individuals"), **5** ("Ferment in Asia") and **6** ("Obstacles to World Government") in *Cold War Fears and Hopes, 1950–52*, edited by Andrew G. Bone. (The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell, Vol. 26.) London and New York: Routledge, forthcoming 2020 (hereafter "*Papers* 26"); quotation (from **11b**) at p. 101.

drawn into discussion of early Cold War Australia by its inquisitive press and public. He hesitated to do so at first, "having arrived too recently", he told listeners in opening the first of his five radio talks for the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC).[4] But Russell ended up having plenty to say about Australian foreign policy, geography and culture in a smattering of newspaper articles, arrival and farewell talks for the country's national broadcaster, and numerous interviews and off-the-cuff comments to reporters, freely given as he moved from state to state. Indeed, he seems to have landed in Australia with an emerging grasp of its relationship both to the rest of the world and the region of which it was geographically a part, a sense of the importance of population, race and immigration in Australia's political discourse, and an appreciation of the constraints placed on its rural development by challenging environmental conditions in the tropical north and arid interior. This last question, answered by Russell with boosterish optimism in the potential of applied science to achieve mastery over a hostile nature, has been expertly probed by Jo-Anne Grant (*2016*) and will be touched on only in passing here. But the connections that Russell made between Australian security and its geopolitical and demographic situations warrant closer scrutiny—not least because of Russell's jarring and seemingly uncritical positioning of Australia as a remote and racially distinct "white man's outpost on the borders of Asia".[5]

II. "Australia is intimately integrated with the problems of the world"

Only two days after arriving in Australia, Russell's attention was diverted from the strange yet oddly familiar society and culture to which he had been transported. The outbreak of the Korean War on 25 June abruptly shifted his focus towards East Asia and back to England. "I hate being so far from home at such a time", he wrote his friends the Crawshay-Williamses on 2 July (see Russell *2001*, 448) albeit after gamely resolving to soldier on with his tour. Fearful for the safety of his older son's family in London[6] in the event of a widening war, Russell even tried (without success) to repurchase from his estranged wife Patricia the cottage in Llan Ffestiniog he had bought in 1946.[7] He viewed Australia as an even safer haven than rural North Wales and never dispensed with the notion—more of a rhetorical ploy—that vestiges of humanity might survive nuclear war in parts of Australia and other remote regions, "in Tierra del Fuego…and in Alice Springs", as he told the latter small town's newspaper during a brief visit to the central Australian outback.[8] Yet one of the stock points he later employed as

an anti-nuclear campaigner[9] was that the next world would be catastrophic for belligerents and neutrals alike—and Australia, increasingly enmeshed in a Cold War alliance system led by the United States, was far from neutral in any case.

Russell's thoughts on Australian security were probably more accurately reflected in his observation that "technical causes" made it impossible for Australia "to keep out of the complications and tragedies of the old world" The Second World War had starkly illustrated Russell's point about Australia being "intimately integrated with the great problems of the world".[10] But the nature of that integration was changing. In a wartime essay about Britain's diminished imperial standing, Russell (*1944*) correctly intuited that the simultaneous expansion of American power in the Pacific "will mean, inevitably, that Australia and New Zealand will be drawn more and more into the orbit of the United States". Indeed, the central thrust of Australian foreign policy since 1945 had been towards striking a military alliance with the Americans. Although the United States harboured reservations about binding security arrangements in the Pacific analogous to what NATO represented in Europe, these doubts were removed by the Korean War, which quickly signalled an extension of American containment policy globally. The commitment of Australian ground troops to the fighting made the United States even more favourably disposed to a mutual defence treaty, which was signed by these two powers and New Zealand in September 1951. The ANZUS pact became the central pillar of Australian security for the next two decades, and Australia's participation in the Korean War was an early example of what would be enshrined as "forward defence" (i.e. a strategy of confronting perceived Cold War threats at a distance), which led also to military intervention in Malaya (twice) and, most controversially, in Vietnam.

Thus, Australia's relations with the region of which it was geographically a part were constrained by the anti-communist alliance to which it was bound, as they had been by the imperatives of the British Empire. But Australia did not seamlessly exchange one dependent relationship for another. The older, imperial framework of security may have been disrupted by the Second World War, but Britain remained a primary reference point for Australian diplomacy and defence. Its troops were even stationed in the Middle East in support of British bomber bases as the Cold War was turning hot in Korea, and the Liberal–Country coalition led for sixteen years by unabashedly Anglophile Robert Menzies would willingly and controversially abet Britain's nuclear testing programme (see Arnold and Smith *2006*). More generally, British influence on Australia would persist until the end of the Menzies era in the mid-1960s when—with a post-imperial Britain looking towards Europe, and Australian trade and immigration pivoting towards Asia—the relationship "unravelled with astonishing speed" (Bridge *2013*, 518).

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[9]   Most famously, in "Man's Peril" (**16** in *Papers* 28).
[10]   *Guest of Honour* (*Papers* 26: 5).

Russell sensed the depth of Australian apprehension about the vast and now dangerously unstable region to its north. This "dread of invasion from Asia"[11] had been centred for years on a militaristic Japan but was now shifting towards the new bugbear of Communist China (see Gifford *2001*, 179, 184–6). Writing from Melbourne to Rupert Crawshay-Williams, Russell noted how, in contrast to the British, Australians were "much more conscious of Asia; they were alarmed when the Japs got into Papua, and have remained so" (26 July 1950, RA REC. ACQ. 501e). These anxieties were only fuelled by the eruption of armed conflict on the Korean peninsula, and some of Russell's ensuing prognostications were unlikely to have assuaged nervy Australian speculation about this fighting spreading uncontrollably outwards.[12] Many Australians (not least Prime Minister Menzies) were deeply troubled by the "ferment" diagnosed in Russell's "Asian" lecture (**5** in *Papers* 26) and emphasized the dangers emanating from a continent in upheaval. But Russell was in closer alignment with those Australian voices (many from inside the AIIA) calling for the cultivation of more constructive and less antagonistic relationships with the region. In critiquing for the benefit of his daughter a recent survey of Asian developments (Payne *1948*) that he nevertheless found useful, Russell offered a tidy summation of his own position—almost equally passionate in its anti-imperialism and Cold War partisanship:

> My own view is this: the day of Western imperialism in Asia is past, but there is a new danger of Russian imperialism. If Asia is to be made aware of this danger, we of the West must make it obvious that we no longer threaten Asia's independence. The British have done well in India, and in recognizing the communist government of China. If America and France could be induced to follow suit, and not to oppose land reform in Asia, S.E. Asia would become a large neutral block. Nehru has the right ideas. China would adopt Titoism if the West did not stand for everything corrupt and reactionary in China. We ought to give up Hongkong. The French ought to abandon Indo-China. Malaya is difficult because it earns dollars, but I think an arrangement should be possible (29 Sept. 1950, RA REC. ACQ. 435).

Although far from blasé about the rise of communism in Asia, Russell was quick to point out that past and present Western mistakes were stoking its appeal and called in his lecture for the complete eradication of "whatever remains of British, French or Dutch imperialism". He was also desperate for the Cold War to be kept out of Asia, urging that "the West should preach everywhere the doctrine that the conflict between Russia and the Atlantic Powers is a conflict among Europeans, from which every prudent Asiatic would wish to stand aloof."[13] But even before he issued this appeal to the first of several Australian audiences, it was superseded by events in Korea that brought the Cold War into Asia with a vengeance.

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[11] "Happy Australia", *The Observer*, London, 22 Oct. 1950, p. 4 (B&R C50.36); *Papers* 26: 124–5.

[12] See, e.g., his interview with George H. Johnston of the Sydney *Sun* ("Bertrand Russell Thinks Russia Will Go to War, and—World War 3 Will Last Ten Years", 30 June 1950, p. 15 (B&R E50.07); App. I.**7** in *Papers* 26.

[13] "Ferment in Asia". Typescript (RA1 220.018910; *Papers* 26: 37, 34).

Chinese intervention in the Korean War would shortly magnify Australian suspicions of its new communist regime. Diplomatic recognition had initially been favoured by members of the Labor government which lost office in December 1949, but then ruled out from well-founded concerns that the party would be labelled soft on communism by a Liberal opposition whose Cold War rhetoric was, indeed, ratcheted up for the general election campaign (see Andrews *1985*, 144–5). The China policy of the incoming administration followed the lead of the United States rather than Britain, which (with Russell's approval) quickly recognized Mao's regime. Australia did not exhibit the tolerance of its American ally for the rump Chinese state led by Chiang Kai-shek (one of Russell's Cold War *bêtes noires*). But in other respects the Menzies government looked at Asia through the same Cold War prism as the United States (*ibid.*, 157–67). The new administration was certainly less comfortable than its Labor predecessor with the end of European empire and inclined from the outset to interpret the turbulence of which Russell wrote as the product of imported communist ideology rather than internal conditions—political subordination, social misery and economic exploitation (see Smith *1997*, 102). In the aftermath of the Chinese Revolution, an exaggerated state of alarm about communism encroached onto Australia's domestic political scene as well. Indeed, Australia was "second only to the U.S. in the hostility directed towards local members of the party, and in the intensity of public anxieties" (Murphy *2000*, 97–8).[14]

Strategic and diplomatic cooperation with an all-powerful United States was judged by many Australians as the best insurance against threats all too readily detected not only at home but also, first and foremost, throughout the Asia–Pacific region. But Australia's Asian diplomacy also had a more generous and less apprehensive face—which Russell commended since it meshed with his conviction that peace would always be threatened without "the abolition of white imperialism, and the raising of the standard of life in impoverished countries".[15] The outgoing Labor government paved the way for an alternative model of engagement with the region, notably by the dispatch in 1948 of a somewhat fraught goodwill mission to Asia led by W. Macmahon Ball (see Waters *1994*), an occasional diplomat as well as an AIIA academic, who brought not only the hand of Australian friendship but also promises of economic, technical and educational assistance. Then, at the Conference of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers in Colombo in January 1950, Australia's newly appointed (Liberal–Country) Minister of

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14   A major constitutional crisis was triggered by the determination of the Menzies administration to outlaw the small Australian Communist Party. Legislation compelling anyone "declared" to be communist to show otherwise had been introduced but was stalled in the federal parliament's Labor-controlled Senate when Russell was in Australia. It passed into law in slightly amended form in September, only to be overturned by the High Court six months later. Undeterred, the Prime Minister then called a snap "double dissolution" election, which left his ruling coalition in command of both legislative chambers. Instead of bringing in another bill, however, Menzies moved for a prohibition by constitutional amendment, which was narrowly rejected in the September 1951 referendum. Russell waded briefly into the still-escalating controversy about a month before leaving for Australia, telling a reporter from the Adelaide *Advertiser*, that he had no qualms about treating communists as "public enemies. But I cannot approve of the proposal to place the onus of proof upon the accused ("A Philosopher's Theme", 31 May 1950, p. 2; *Papers* 26: 562).

15   "We and the U.S. Can Lead and Help Asian People", *Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, 13 July 1950, p. 8 (B&R C50.24); *Papers* 26: 67.

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External Affairs, Percy Spender (who later met Russell in Sydney), was instrumental in formulating an ambitious aid plan for south and south-east Asia.

This initiative was lauded by Russell as "one of the few really encouraging events of our time in the international sphere" (*1950*). Donor nations need not be motivated by humanitarianism alone. With political stability likely to be reinforced by economic development, the Western powers had an interest as well as a duty in ameliorating poverty in Asia. Commenting on the "Spender Plan" for an Adelaide newspaper a few weeks before flying to Australia, he considered this "the only way to combat Communism. These Eastern peoples must be given a comfortable standard of living".[16] Although the Colombo Plan was bolstered by the adhesion of the United States in 1951 and the extension of its coverage to non-Commonwealth states, it was never a Marshall Plan for Asia. On his "arrival" broadcast on ABC radio, Russell praised the fourth point of President Truman's 1949 inauguration address as a noble and principled template for the delivery of overseas aid (*Papers* 26: 6–7). But he also appreciated how the fulfilment of "Point Four" or similar pledges was likely to be complicated by political considerations, later complaining about the parsimony of the United States Congress in this regard.[17] A similar reticence about Australia's far from onerous financial obligations under the Colombo Plan (which amounted to U.S. $72 million by 1956) was present inside its ruling coalition (see Gifford *2001*, 175–8). However resonant were Russell's warnings to Australia as "a white man's outpost close to the great centres of overflowing poverty",[18] responsibility for alleviating those conditions was not readily accepted. If an ancillary objective of the initiative was to curry diplomatic favour in Asia, then these returns on the Colombo Plan for Australia were also limited. Any goodwill generated by the placement of Asian students or the participation of young Australian technicians in development projects overseas was more than offset by Asian outrage over Australia's restrictive immigration policy.

III. "The problem of preserving Australia as a white man's country"

"White Australia" had been enshrined in the first legislative enactment of the new Commonwealth in 1901,[19] although several pre-federation statutes, imposing head taxes on immigrant Chinese gold miners, were similarly intended. The policy was doggedly championed by the Australian labour movement in particular. Russell had been aware of racial exclusivism in Australian immigration (and of organized labour's support for it) at least since the 1920s, when he appraised the policy rather more critically than he would three decades later. In the earlier period he had focused on the

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[16]   "A Philosopher's Theme", *The Advertiser*, 31 May 1950, p. 2; *Papers* 26: 562.
[17]   "Competition and Co-operation in Politics and Economics", *Progress* (Unilever Ltd.), 42, no. 232 (autumn 1951): 13–16. (B&R C51.34); *Papers* 26: 212.
[18]   "Ferment in Asia" (*Papers* 26: 37).
[19]   The Immigration Restriction Act, which barred no named nationalities from Australia but conferred such broad discretion on government authorities by its notorious language test that Asian immigrants were easily and systematically refused entry.

cosmopolitanism of international finance as well as the nativism of Australian labour and other white working classes, for he tended to situate the practice in the broader context of anti-Asian sentiment throughout "the English-speaking world":

> Opposition to Asiatic immigration in America and the British Dominions comes most from the Trade Unions and Labour Parties; the capitalists would be only too glad to welcome cheap labour. As industry develops in Asia, there will be increasing competition between Asiatic and Euro-American manufactures. So long as Asiatic enterprises are largely financed by European capital, European capitalists will wish them to develop; they will be used as a stick to beat the Trade Unions with. But in proportion as labour has power in the West, in that proportion it will insist on the exclusion of Asiatic manufactured goods from all the markets which it controls.[20]

In the post-World War II era "White Australia" was rigidly upheld by Labor's Minister of Immigration Arthur Callwell, even as he directed "the largest planned immigration programme of any nation … with the exception of Israel" (Langfield *1997*, 31). Non-whites remained *personae non gratae*, but in order to maintain an ambitious population growth target of one percent per annum from immigration alone, Australia opened its doors to thousands of war refugees (as urged by Russell[21]), as well as to southern and south-eastern Europeans who would have been unwelcome previously. Convinced that Australia was seriously underpopulated, Russell frequently dwelt on this problem (including its racial dimension)—usually in counterpoint to the crisis of over-population afflicting Asian countries mired in grinding poverty. Australia's present rate of population growth was "pathetically, dangerously slow", he contended, and its people should be reminded forcefully of the "urgent necessity" of increasing their numbers—"the most important safeguard of Australian security in the long run". This was a "matter of self-preservation",[22] he told one reporter, employing the "populate or perish" alarmism by which the acceleration of non-English speaking (but still white) immigration was marketed to a wary Australian public in the early post-war years (see Langfield *1997*, 32). In tying Australia's geopolitical vulnerability to the small size of its population (approximately eight million in 1950), Russell was not making any dramatic revelations to Australian audiences. Yet his analysis is striking—chiefly because of its unintended validation of the "White Australia" policy. Not surprisingly, given the widespread acceptance of a racially exclusive approach to immigration, Russell's observations were favourably received— as intimated by such headlines as "Bertrand Russell

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20 Russell *1926.* See also the following passage written two years previously for the Independent Labour Party weekly, *The New Leader*: "Throughout the English-speaking world, Labour has successfully opposed Asiatic immigration, for fear of its effect in lowering the standard of life. But Labour has not yet developed any method of preventing white capitalists from investing their capital in Asia, and so producing an even more severe competition. This policy of investment in Asia requires a Government in Asiatic countries able to establish internal order, but unable or unwilling to keep out the foreign capitalist" (Russell *1924*).

21 "Bertrand Russell Smokes, Laughs—and Talks", *The Age*, Melbourne, 21 July 1950, p. 2; *Papers* 26: 586.

22 "Philosopher Bertrand Russell Here Next Month", *The Australian Women's Weekly,* 6 May 1950, p. 17 (B&R E50.00); "We and the U.S. Can Lead and Help Asian People"; "Future Work Depends on Stalin, Says Lord Russell", *Daily Mercury*, Mackay, QLD, 14 July 1950, p. 1 (B&R E50.09b) (*Papers* 26: 559, 67, 581, respectively).

Puts Case for White Australia" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 July 1950, p. 2) or "Support for Race Policy" (*Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, 4 July 1950, p. 5). In fairness to Russell, the same lecture (on racial divisions as an ultimately surmountable obstacle to world government) was also reported as "How the Races Could Live Side by Side" (*Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, 4 July 1950, p. 8) and "Russell Hits at Racial Hatreds" (*Sun*, Melbourne, 4 July 1950, p. 2).

For decades "White Australia" had been reinforced by pseudo-scientific theorizing about the innate inferiority or superiority of some races to others. After the Second World War the discourse of anti-Asian prejudice shifted: "Personality rather than race, behaviour rather than blood, were now emphasized in discussions of national identity and immigration" that centred on the capacity of different racial or ethnic groups to assimilate into an Australian "way of life" (Murphy *2000*, 154). Biological racism was abhorrent to Russell, and in his world government lecture he strongly approved of intermarriage as a solvent of racial antagonism.[23] Yet he did not seriously question whether "preserving Australia as a white man's country" was a "problem" that needed to be tackled.[24] He also seemed unaware of the bitter resentment of Australian immigration controls in newly independent Asian states. A few Australian politicians and officials already regarded "White Australia" as an embarrassing diplomatic millstone. But when Russell toured the country the policy remained "part of the fabric of Australian political culture, supported across the political spectrum by most sections of the community" (Waters *1994*, 358). For Russell, Australia's population shortfall was definitely *not* to be offset by desperately poor peoples from Asian countries that were "densely over-populated and urgently desirous of opportunities of emigration"[25]. Although Russell insisted in "Ferment in Asia" that it was "both just and expedient that economic aid should be given to South East Asia" (*Papers* 26: 33), in the same lecture he opposed unrestricted immigration in a decidedly utilitarian fashion:

> I do not consider that countries of Western civilization should open their doors to Asiatic immigration. If this were done without a lowering of the Asian birth-rate the only effect would be to destroy the superior standards of life at present enjoyed in the West. The best would be pulled down to the level of the worst, not the worst raised up to the level of the best. But to prevent population pressure bursting its dams may at some point be only possible if the West has military preponderance. (*Ibid*., 37)

For Russell, the small size of Australia's population, the country's national security, and its discriminatory approach to immigration were intimately related. In establishing these linkages, he spoke to the abiding fears of a nation whose collective memory of the Pacific war was still raw and

[23] "Obstacles to World Government". Typescript (RA1 220.220.018950; *Papers* 26: 55–6). See also *New Hopes for a Changing World* (Russell *1951*, 112–15)—the book which drew on some of Russell's Australian lecture material and whose buoyant general expressions of confidence in the capacity of "modern technique to bring a far higher level of happiness than was formerly possible" (*ibid.*, 165) perhaps drew on Russell's Utopian imaginings of a "safe, prosperous and fertile Australia" (Grant *2016*, 73).
[24] *Guest of Honour* (*Papers* 26: 5).
[25] *Ibid*., 6.

where Chinese communism was supplanting Japanese imperialism as a focus of popular anxiety. Yet Russell also addressed the issue of under-population in a less foreboding vein, which meshed more with Australian hopes: "If Australians are to hold their own as a white man's outpost on the borders of Asia"—an objective of which the Russell of 1950 unquestionably approved—"they can hardly hope to be successful while their population is no larger than that of London."[26] But Russell was confident that Australia *could* support a much larger population and was significantly more bullish in his projections of future growth than the Commonwealth government.[27] The "energetic encouragement of immigration on a large scale" (but only from Europe) was a necessary first step towards this goal. But "a parallel development of technical progress" was also required, he added, touching on the question of rural growth, which he actually ranked as "the most important problem with which Australia has to deal".[28]

IV. Australia and Russell's Early Cold War "Respectability"

At a farewell luncheon for Russell in Sydney on 23 August, the AIIA's general secretary, George Caiger, paid fulsome tribute to the guest of honour's recent contributions to Australian public life: "You have roused us, generating light as well as a little heat…. Your comments have been an astringent change from the guarded statements and the half-truths which so often in recent years have debased the currency of ideas". Russell had consistently "hewed to the line…of Truth", Caiger continued, and as a result "the chips of criticism fell sometimes on the Right and sometimes on the Left" (typescript, RA REC. ACQ. 291e). Certainly, Russell had come under fire from both sides of the Australian political spectrum—from the Right, for example, for an alleged overindulgence of Communist China. Canberra's leading daily could applaud Russell's call for Western states to back non-communist movements in south-east Asia but questioned his confidence in Beijing's ability to remain outside Moscow's orbit and disdained his enthusiasm for extending diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic. The newspaper's editorial echoed the ruling Liberal–Country coalition's rejection of this approach, which commanded widespread popular backing even before the onset of Chinese military intervention in the Korean War in November 1950.[29]

From the far Left Russell was attacked for a seemingly fatalistic acceptance that another world war was inevitable. On 1 August the small and embattled Australian Communist Party even staged a protest outside Russell's second "Atomic Age" lecture at the University of Melbourne and distributed

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[26] "My Impressions of Australia" (*Papers* 26: 120).

[27] In "Science Can Help Australia Support More People" (*Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, 21 July 1950, p. 8 (B&R C50.27), Russell suggested that "the population of Australia might rise to 50,000,000 at the end of thirty years, and perhaps to 100,000,000 by the end of the present century" (*Papers* 26: 70)—forecasts far exceeding the roughly accurate official target of 20 million people by the year 2000, by which time Australia's population had climbed to 19.6 million (see Grant *2016*, 80).

[28] "My Impressions of Australia"; "Happy Australia" (*Papers* 26: 120 and 126, respectively).

[29] "Recognition of Red China", *Canberra Times*, 20 July 1950, p. 4, and "Ferment in Asia" (*Papers* 26: 32) for Russell's forecast of future Chinese "Titoism".

flyers lambasting the speaker as a "Man of War" (see Griffin *1974–75*, 11). This makeshift polemic (copy in RA REC. ACQ. 291d) referred not to anything said by Russell in his first lecture a week previously, but rather to a recently published conversation with George H. Johnston in the Sydney *Sun* (see n. 12 above), in which he had predicted that the Soviet Union would provoke a third world war. The Communist Party's message was that peaceful coexistence was perfectly feasible and that the principle of self-determination should be respected throughout Asia—by contrast with Russell's clarion call in the newspaper, quoted back at him, for the Western powers to "detach as much as we possibly can of Asia from the Russian orbit" (*Papers*, 26: 571). If allegations of war-mongering seem far fetched, it is worth noting that the Russell who visited Australia at the mid-century mark was moving only slowly from the orthodox and sometimes pugnacious defence of the West he had mounted in the early post-war years, towards the dissenting advocacy of nuclear disarmament and détente upon which he only embarked in earnest from the mid-1950s.

In fact, Russell was, as he recalled, at "the apogee of my respectability" (*1969*, 26)—and not only because of the prestigious formal honours bestowed on him in 1949 (Order of Merit) and 1950 (Nobel Prize for Literature). As a still staunch upholder of the West in its Cold War struggle with communism, Russell's political views were perhaps "safer" than ever before. The arc of his transformation into the role of anti-nuclear prophet and sage, by which he is much better remembered by posterity, was neither steep nor smooth. Some of his writings from the period immediately prior (including his Australian lectures, broadcasts and newspaper articles) echo harsh past criticism of Soviet expansionism and dictatorship, although others certainly register growing qualms about the reckless conduct of American foreign policy and the baneful effects of anti-communist hysteria inside the United States. Whether continuing to push for western rearmament, or highlighting in more placatory vein the folly of the Cold War's divisions and rival fanaticisms, however, Russell insisted that his paramount objective was avoiding the major war that threatened global catastrophe.[30]

In his first Melbourne lecture Russell grimly evoked the devastating effects of a thermonuclear war. He sided firmly with the pessimistic scientists whose University of Chicago Round Table discussion he had recently read, rather than the American scientific administrator Vannevar Bush, author of a "reassuring" treatise on modern military strategy.[31] But the overall impression left by Russell was less ominous than it would be after March 1954, when the H-bomb era dramatically opened with the experimental explosion of a fifteen megaton American thermonuclear device over

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[30] See, e.g., Russell's detailed refutation (**52b** in *Papers* 26) of Kingsley Martin's public insinuation that he had favoured waging preventive war against the Soviet Union ("Lord Russell and the Atom Bomb", *The New Statesman and Nation*, n.s. 41 [21 April 1951]: 448, 450 [B&R C51.13]). Russell's letter to the editor of the left-wing weekly was accompanied by a formal retraction from Martin. The same charge had already been levelled at Russell (neither for the first nor the last time) by the Cambridge University Labour Club after he spoke hawkishly at a press conference in the United States only a few weeks after returning from Australia, and he could never put the wider controversy to rest (see *Papers* 26: 367–71).

[31] "The Facts about the Hydrogen Bomb", *The University of Chicago Round Table*, 623 (26 Feb. 1950): 1–12 and Bush *1950*.

Bikini atoll (see *Papers* 28: xvii– xxiv). From that moment the threat of civilization's complete destruction became the overriding factor in Russell's assessment of the Cold War and the nuclear arms race. As he toured Australia four years previously, however, he was willing to give some credence to military strategists who considered that nuclear weapons would not be decisive if world war broke out in the very near future (see *Papers* 26: lxi–lxiv) and that the final outcome of such a conflict would likely be settled only after "long years of bitter land warfare". In Melbourne he was also prepared to state that, however appalling the prospect of war, "it would be even more dreadful and more disastrous if the Soviet system, with all its cruelty and all its obscurantism, were to extend over the whole world".[32] Although Russell was careful to balance such defiance with emphasis on the importance of war prevention, his anti-Soviet rhetoric was markedly more pronounced than it would be even a few years hence, and his rational yet robust "defencism"[33] would have been palatable to many Australians newly alarmed by the outbreak of war in Korea.

v. Conclusion

Far more predictable than the occasional political rebuke of Russell was his arousal of Catholic clerical ire for advocating birth control in his world government lectures. These attacks prompted one defender of his case cheekily to suggest that Russell had no interest in population-limitation as a demographic strategy for *Australia*.[34] Even Russell's pollyannaish blueprints of Australian rural development were sometimes disdained (see *Papers* 26: xl–xli). But cheerleaders of Russell's expansive vision of the country's social and economic future outnumbered the naysayers, and when he addressed issues of national security, population and race, he also garnered more applause than censure. More striking than Russell's occasional antagonism of different Australian constituencies in 1950 is the extent to which he reinforced rather than challenged the assumptions of his audiences. While condemning racial hatred unreservedly as "an illiberal and irrational heritage from our animal past",[35] Russell managed to do so without calling for the discriminatory basis of Australian immigration to be lifted. Although "White Australia" still commanded majority popular and political

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[32] "Living in the Atomic Age. I. Institutions". Manuscript (RA1 220.018980; *Papers* 26: 90, 91).

[33] The term is used by Martin Ceadel (*2003*, 473), who situates this dominant mode of thinking about war and peace in the middle of a spectrum with absolute pacifism at one end and crusading militarism at the other. Defencists reject aggression but assert the legitimacy of self-defence, as well as valuing military preparedness as the surest prophylactic against war. But defencism is also grounded in a deeply pessimistic assumption—not shared by Russell—that warfare can never truly be eradicated. Russell never lost sight of the achievable institutional reforms and psychological adjustments through which he thought that permanent peace could be secured. In this respect, he was closer (even in 1950) to the "pacificist" orientation dissected by Ceadel in the same essay, which looks ahead to the elimination of war but without eschewing all recourse to force in the short term.

[34] See L.F. Giblin, "Birth Control", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 June 1950, p. 2. The author of this letter to the editor was the Tasmanian economist and retired civil servant who liaised between Russell and the AIIA during the planning stages of the 1950 Dyason Lectures. Giblin was refuting the Rev. Dr. Leslie Rumble, a Catholic priest and well-known religious broadcaster (see *Papers* 26: 42 and, for Russell's public spat with the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr. Daniel Mannix, *ibid.*, [paper] **12**.

[35] "Obstacles to World Government" (*Papers* 26: 56)

support, there were some detractors—from inside the small Australian peace movement, for example, or a diplomatic corps frustrated by the damaging perceptions of the policy among newly independent states in the Asia–Pacific region (see Gurry and Tavan *2004*). Russell's views were definitely not in harmony with those of these dissenting minorities. Similarly, while he was gratified that the age of imperialism in Asia was drawing to a close, Russell did not push Australia towards any geopolitical repositioning *within* a region undergoing dramatic transformation and likely, he wrote, to become "much more important and much more dominant than it has been during the last 400 years" [36]. Australia was an "isolated outpost of Western civilization" and need not imagine itself otherwise.[37] Ardent anti-colonialism may have undergirded Russell's call for the immediate implementation of "energetic measures" to eradicate the vestiges of European influence in Asia.[38] But his analysis of the continent nevertheless offered something to those in Cold War Australia still fixated on Asian threats.

If Russell had travelled to Australia only a few years later, both his optimism and the nation's plaudits would probably have been more muted. Although hardly free of atomic angst when he did visit, by the mid-1950s his sombre messages of foreboding about the existential threat to humanity carried much greater urgency. After he dedicated himself to anti-nuclear protest, Russell consumed his early Cold War respectability, and it is difficult to imagine him at this slightly later time consorting so freely in Australia with "Governors, Chancellors, High Commissioners and such" (to Elizabeth Crawshay-Williams, 2 Aug. 1950, RA REC. ACQ. 501e). Especially implausible is the thought of him dining with the foreign minister of a Commonwealth government complicit in the testing of British nuclear weapons on Australian soil. In 1950 no contact seems to have been established between Russell and the small, struggling Australian peace movement (see Wittner *1993*, 104), even though his advocacy of world government provided some common ground. Galvanized by "Man's Peril" among other keynote anti-nuclear texts, not to mention propinquity to British (and American) nuclear test sites, Australian resistance to the bomb started to gather momentum around the same time as Russell's. If he had returned to Australia in the mid-1950s or later, it is likely that religious, political and scientific organizations committed to peace would have reached out to him and that Russell would have done the same.

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[36] "Ferment in Asia" (*Papers* 26: 28).
[37] "'South-East Asia Must Be Wooed as Neutral!'", *The Sun*, Melbourne, 2 Aug. 1950, p. 9 (B&R E50.11b); *Papers* 26: 589.
[38] "Ferment in Asia" (*Papers* 26: 37.

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