

time: about Jews in Germany having no future, about Zionism (which he always strongly supported), about the communist proclivities of the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and anti-Semitism, and about the positive future of Australian Jewry. Perhaps only on Jewish day schools – he opposed the establishment of a Liberal Jewish day school, the establishment of which was delayed until the 1970s – did his wisdom lapse on the big issues of the day. Rabbi Levi's fine biography complements his other excellent study (1995) of *Rabbi Jacob Danglow* and his many other highly valuable works on Australian Jewish history, written over a long period. It is a model of its kind.

William D. Rubinstein

NOT WELCOME: A DUNERA BOY'S ESCAPE FROM NAZI  
OPPRESSION TO EVENTUAL FREEDOM IN AUSTRALIA.

By Sue Everett

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Although the story of the HMT *Dunera* was not a major event against the enormity of World War II, it did blot England's record in relation to the rescue and treatment of German and Austrian Jewish refugees, and also Australia's.

This most recent account, *Not welcome: a Dunera boy's escape from Nazi oppression to eventual freedom in Australia*, is a combined biographical/autobiographical work telling of the experiences of one of the 'Dunera Boys', told by his daughter-in-law, Sue Everett, in combination with his own writings.

Ludwig (Lutz) Ernst Eichbaum was born in Nuremberg in 1923 to a well-to-do moderately Jewishly observant family of self-employed toy importers/exporters. His father, Fritz, had received several military honours for special service to his country in World War I, but like others, the Eichbaums were caught up in increasingly discriminatory and restrictive Nazi edicts from 1933 on.

Lutz Eichbaum's life of holidays with his mother, his education and bar mitzvah, social activities with family and friends, was not affected at first, save that he was compelled to move from a government to a Jewish school. But soon restrictions increased until *Kristallnacht* on 9 November 1938, which proved the defining moment in deciding to leave Germany. England, through its *Kindertransport* program, saved around 10,000 children (mostly Jewish) from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Lutz Eichbaum, sixteen at the time, was sent on one of these *Kindertransport*s. He departed on 31 July 1939 and, on reaching London by train, was taken to Westcliff-on-Sea, a quiet seaside resort where Lutz was to board. Here he was unhappy, unaccepted and lonely with a distant uncle, Hans, and his highly unsympathetic great-aunt, Bertha.

When Britain declared war on Germany on 3 September, tribunals were set up to classify refugees into three categories of aliens, whether refugees from Nazi

oppression or non-refugees, according to their possible threat to English society. In May 1940, believing that invasion of England was imminent, newly-invested Prime Minister Winston Churchill responded to media and right-wing xenophobia by issuing a dictate: 'Collar the lot'. This led to the indiscriminate round-up of approximately 27,000 men of German and Austrian origin aged between sixteen and 70, with Lutz Eichbaum among them.

Within a month, the High Commissioner of the UK in Australia submitted a request to the Australian Government to accept 6,000 internees and prisoners of war for internment. Prime Minister Robert G. Menzies accepted and, by September of that year, 2,542 men arrived in Australia on board the HMT *Dunera*, a sombre grey and black former troop ship overseen by a ruthless, officious and punitive crew. They ignored a memorandum issued by Sir Herbert Emerson, Director of the Evian Committee and League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, issued on 23 July 1940, stating: 'The truth is that the great majority of "B" and "C" class are decent, well-living persons who have gone through one suffering after another, and who have grounds for hating the Nazi system'.

He also added that it would be most desirable to keep the refugees as fully employed as possible and that these deportees would make excellent citizens and would add to the economic welfare of the country. The High Commissioner's words appear to have cut no ice.

By then, the men were already three weeks into the journey, living a life that was the very antithesis of Sir Herbert Emerson's recommendation. From the outset they were confronted by a hostile crew with bayonets at the ends of rifles, who body-searched all new arrivals, stole all their personal belongings, threw suitcases and manuscripts overboard, and kicked, beat and bruised them with scant provocation. On board ship they suffered overcrowding, poor nutrition, diarrhoea, overflowing toilets, lice, apathy, boredom, pessimism and melancholy which led one desperate internee to leap overboard in suicide. Despite this, a number of internees did try to make a life of sorts on the journey, there being amongst them authorities in philosophy, literature, English, music, agriculture, geography and economics over the 58-day voyage, culminating in the ship's landing at Sydney Harbour on 6 September 1940. Lutz meticulously recorded all these details on scraps of paper which he later transcribed into a small black notebook.

Handed over to Australian soldiers as their guards, Lutz and the other internees were struck by an immediate difference between their English and Australian masters. Although they were still viewed as enemy aliens and transferred to camps that were enclosed within barbed wire, their maltreatment ceased, while the Australian soldiers were more friendly, humane, interested and non-judgmental. That was heartening, but not so appealing were the primitive conditions in Hay and Tatura, the lack of suitable clothing and blankets against cold weather, the open overflowing urinal cans, a shortage of toiletries, kitchenware, and medical supplies.

Although the public and the press showed increasing sympathy in favour of

the refugees, higher-level Australian governmental officialdom did not. Neither the Department of the Army nor the Prime Minister's Department took any responsibility for them, with all processes that might have helped having been tightly bound up in bureaucratic red tape.

In due course, refugees could apply for repatriation to England and voluntary enrolment in the Pioneer Corps of the British Army in its war against Germany, or else they could enrol in an employment company of the Australian Military Forces. Lutz Eichbaum joined the Eighth Employment Company under the charge of a much admired Commanding Officer, Captain Edward Broughton. Moved between different locations – the docks, Tocumwal, the military barracks at Royal Park and the army camp at Puckapunyal – the major functions of the Company were the loading and unloading goods between ships and freight trains. By 1943, however, the Australian Government abandoned its custodianship of the refugees and all residual detainees were released into civilian life and employment. Eichbaum remained with the army until 1946, when, at 23, seven years after his original departure for England as a mere teenager with the *Kindertransport*, he obtained his Australian Certificate of Naturalisation.

Now free, like other internees he had to re-identify himself within the framework of a civilian life. He distanced himself increasingly from his Jewish origins, anglicised his name to Leslie Ernest Everett and married a non-Jewish woman in a Unitarian Church. He made great efforts to assimilate into his new environment, seemingly untouched by expressions of antisemitism or xenophobia directed at him, and settled into the workforce as a manufacturer's representative.

What adds value to the book's documented experiential narrative of a representative Dunera boy, is the Afterword together with several appendices that relate to the broader picture against which the Dunera story is set. Relevant here are the author's analysis and discussion of the emotional effects of separation from family, incarceration, dislocation and maltreatment of the refugees, subjected for so long to inactivity and frustration, and deprivation of humanity, justice, self-worth, self-determination and normal relationships. Quite apart from the disintegration of personality and mental illness that these caused, there were the difficulties, upon regaining freedom, of re-engaging with the world, even in such simple tasks as using public transport, paying bills, making friends and finding work.

Everett recounts the Australian Government's bureaucratic bungling and lack of accountability, with the Returned Services League firmly arguing for a return of all interned aliens to their country of origin, despite repeated calls by the British Government to release eligible refugees, and the changing public attitude.

In line with this shift, there were people and organisations that did adopt the cause of the detainees and offered help, including the Quakers, visitors from the judiciary responsible for reporting on the situation in the internment camp, several government ministers, the Red Cross, the Council of Civil Liberties and, earlier, when all of Hay's internees were transferred to Tatura in May 1941, a Jewish *lamed*

*vavnik*, a Moshe Feiglin who ran an orchard in Shepparton, provided them with *kosher* food and religious items, and offered them paid work in his orchards. All these were in contrast to the deep disappointment of the internees in the Sydney Jewish Welfare Society's delegate, a Mr Brand, who was pompous, patronising and uninformed about their situation, counselling them to curb any behaviour that might stir up the authorities and to keep up the Jewish faith; likewise Rabbi Falk who delivered a 'bombastic' speech in which he seemed mainly concerned with the needs of the Orthodox Jewish population. The Jewish community in general opted for a low profile lest it stir antisemitism which, the author states, was not far below the surface of Australian life at the time.

The book concludes with the text of the eloquent memorandum, 'the Dunera Statement', drawn up by the internees of Tatura on 2 December 2 1940, addressed to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Sir Geoffrey Whiskard, describing the conditions aboard the *Dunera*, whose report had led to the subsequent inquiry and court-martial of three officers.

For an episode in history that was numerically minute against the millions caught up as combatants and victims by World War II, the *Dunera* bungle has led to an expanding and multi-sided literature and number of audio-visual representations of which this first-hand diary account adds flesh and voice to more academic studies. How much more there is to glean from the affair depends on the questions that historians may still seek to have answered. There does remain a hint that not all may even now be known, given that the British Government has put into force a 100-year ban in regard to classified material pertaining to what it has termed 'The Dunera Event'.

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