

Diary of Moshe Chaim Grunbaum

Hay, Australia

December 10th, 1940

Translated from German by Benjamin Sklarz

Hay, 10th December 1940

This book is not to be a diary. Rather, I wish briefly to record here those experiences which I would like to recall in later years, irrespective of their being good or unpleasant.

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I am starting these records with the day I left Germany, because that day marks the beginning of a new chapter in my life.

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I left Germany on the 23rd August 1939, having already postponed my departure several times. Any further delay I considered to be pointless, since I foresaw clearly the imminent outbreak of war against Poland. I departed with a very heavy heart because I had to leave my beloved parents behind, for whom I had so far not been able to obtain an immigration permit to any country.

At that time, political events were overtaking each other at headlong speed. On the 22nd August 1939 the German newspapers were still announcing the pact between Germany and Russia. To this day, I see in my mind's eye how the Berliners received the news. The papers sold out like hot rolls (to use a popular expression). Everybody was moved to smile and shrug their shoulders. But then, people knew that this business was aimed mainly against Poland. I hurried my departure for the further reason that two tenants in our house in Berlin had been called up, although they were part of an older draft group. When I arrived in Dover via Ostend on August 24th, Britain's declaration of 'mobilisation' was being announced. At that moment I realised that I had left Germany in the nick of time.

My destination was now 'the Kitchener Camp' (K.C.). This was a former World War I camp where General Kitchener had assembled soldiers for their shipment over the Channel to France. This camp, old and decayed as it was, was placed at the disposal of the 'Anglo-Jewish Committee for the Care of Refugees' in accordance with a plan to establish a transit camp for Jews from Germany. I was the 3253rd man to head for transit via this camp. It lay on grounds near the small town of Sandwich. The condition of the huts was such that their four walls barely stood upright. It was now our task to set these huts to rights as far as possible. We had to install doors, windows, roofs, window panes, and electric lights and do all sorts of other jobs. After these repairs, each hut was divided into two sections, and 36 fellows were accommodated in each.

As life in the camp proceeded, everyone was assigned a job. Thus, workshops were set up for bricklayers, painters and carpenters, glaziers, electricians and locksmiths, all for work on the huts, while a road-building team was formed for road works. As the need arose, workshops were also created for shoemakers, tailors, barbers, bicycle repair, printing, watch-making, as well as precision engineering. All craftsmen were assigned to these groups, in which they had to work. Unskilled workers, and those from over-staffed sections, had to work in vital or other essential operations. Here the kitchen, where a lot of work was required, was the first to be considered. I will not go into all the other work departments, but I must outline the kitchen operation. One has to remember that 3,500 men were fed here daily, which was achieved by 400 men working in two shifts. I do not have the least intention of praising their efforts: on the contrary, this was the worst managed operation in the whole camp. An average 40 per cent of all the food was actually left uneaten, because what was prepared from the available ingredients was a disgrace.

I would like to add that the following facilities contributed to making camp life more agreeable: the cinema (with 400 seats), the canteen, a theatre group and an orchestra, a school, a sports ground, table-tennis, and so on.

It was on the 24th August 1939 that I arrived at the camp just described. Having formed some picture of the camp from previous descriptions, I was still somewhat disappointed. Nevertheless, I was glad to have left Germany, because it was apparent from the newspaper reports that the outbreak of war against Poland was only a matter of hours. War preparations in England had started in earnest during my first week there, and I too was conscripted. The K.C. was required to provide several work groups for filling sandbags in the neighbourhood. So this is how I experienced the beginning of the war: it was a Sunday, the 3rd September 1939. I was working with about 70 comrades in Eastry. We were filling earth, or rather, chalk, into smaller sacks, which were then piled up along the outer wall of a local hospital, in front of the windows.

Then, at 11 o'clock in the morning we heard the sirens and the ringing of bells, after the news at 10 o'clock, of the ultimatum to Germany to withdraw her troops from Poland. At the sound of the sirens, all of us, including the British guards, were quite startled and took shelter inside the hospital. Only then did we hear Chamberlain's observations on the radio, describing all the negotiations, and finally ending with the words: "We are now at war with Germany." This was also the prelude to changes in routine at the K.C. First of all, study classes were interrupted. People were upset, and as a

result, the work details did not perform as usual. What was naturally worst of all was that all postal contact with our nearest and dearest was cut off.

That same month the Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of all England, came to visit us. Among other things in his address, he said: "I am proud that this country has had the honour of being able to provide you with a place of refuge. I hope furthermore that this country will take advantage of all the help you are willing to give." He ended by saying: "It will be a great achievement when we in this country will regard you not merely as refugees whom we were glad to welcome, but as fellow workers in a common cause that will unite us all." People sighed with relief at these words. We thought that we would now be integrated into the British economy, because the Archbishop's visit and his speech appeared in all the newspapers. We already saw ourselves living outside the camp, working as employees at a job, living once more in a town among other people and societies. But all these were just thoughts, dreams, and wishes.

Around the 20th October, Lord Reading appeared at K.C. and urged people to join the H.M.P.C. (His Majesty's Pioneer Corps). Although the nature of the H.M.P.C. was not made clear in Lord Reading's first address, it emerged clearly from his discussions with the hut leaders. The agitation among our fellows can well be imagined. Some had left a wife and family in Germany, others, parents and siblings – and now they were to fight against Germany. They dared not think or imagine what would happen to their relations if they themselves were to fall into enemy hands. The following also has to be taken into account: the majority in K.C. were migrants, people who, sooner or later, intended to emigrate to the U.S.A., South America, Palestine, or elsewhere. The wives and children of some had already reached these destinations. It is thus more than understandable that most of these people refused to join the H.M.P.C. I do not wish to enlarge on several anxious days that we experienced, nor on the pressure which, so to speak, the Jewish Committees exerted on us in order to make us join, because those incidents were more than mean.

Around January 1940 the H.M.P.C. made a start in the K.C. Out of some 1,850 men who had originally reported, finally only about 1,000 remained. The other residents of the K.C., who originally numbered 3,500, resolved into those who wanted to migrate and those who, though without migration plans, did not join up. The H.M.P.C. was, as it were, accommodated among us. The non-joiners moved into the hindermost huts, vacating some 15 huts in front. Those who joined up were sworn in, given uniforms and assigned to these military huts. For every man accommodated in the K.C., the army now paid about 2s. 2d. a day. Out of this income, the K.C. Committee was able to

increase our wages, or rather, our pocket money. This was paid out only to those who worked, and, in the first two months of my time there, had comprised a weekly 6d. + 2½d. in the form of a postage stamp for one letter abroad. This pocket money was then raised to 1s., 1.6s., and 2.6s. until, finally, payment continued at 5s., or 6 to 7s. for a “foreman”. I myself, having been assigned to the shoemaking workshop as a foreman through my connections, received a weekly 6 s. according to the new pay scheme. Of course, I held only the business management, but did acquire some shoemaking know-how during those seven months, so that in the last two months I was additionally given the management of the workshop. Now and again I would try and earn something on the side.

Possibilities for this existed in the K.C. as follows. The army authorities were setting up a radio station on a site opposite the camp. It was to be a service that would listen in to all German broadcasters. A secret project, this station was guarded day and night. Guard duty was continuous, and carried out in four shifts which relieved each other. Now it happened that one or other of the guards fell sick. For lack of manpower, his replacement would have to be found in one of the work groups. So I too would occasionally report for the night-shift, from 12 o’clock midnight to 6 o’clock in the morning, and thereby earned 10d. per night. The work required me to sit in front of a radio receiver and listen in on the Deutschland transmitter, or Breslau, Hamburg, and also Warsaw. I had to wear a headset the whole time and to report everything I heard. This was done every fifteen minutes on a pre-printed form. When music was broadcast, I had to indicate every piece by name, give the name of the composer, and for how many minutes the piece was played, along with other data. News of the day broadcast in German, English, and French, or anything beyond the programme, special announcements, etc., had to be “recorded”. The recording equipment stood in another room and every receiver was connected to switches. For example, when I heard a special announcement, I would simply switch over to have it recorded by that recording device. When the announcement was finished I had merely to disconnect the recorder and note down that the item had been recorded. Between 2 and 5 o’clock in the morning there was usually total silence and I used those hours to deal with my letters.

Meanwhile, the war picture appeared to be changing. Germany marched into Denmark and Norway, then, a month later, into Belgium and Holland, and thereby Germany began its defeat of France. The camp was situated in the Duchy of Kent, a region now declared to be a “protected area”. It was for this reason that the camp residents, who had all passed before a tribunal and (99 per cent of them) obtained the designation “Refugee from Nazi oppression. Free from internment and any further restrictions”, were now subjected to restrictions. We were no longer allowed to visit coastal towns

such as Ramsgate, Margate, and Minster, because coastal defence batteries were being mounted there. As a result of the German army's territorial gains in Belgium and northern France, we had not only moved closer to the range of the German air force but to a distance of a mere 40 miles. For this reason, we felt obliged to approach the Camp Administration and request relocation of the camp. On the 10th May, as we got up, we realised to our amazement that armed men had been stationed around the K.C. and we were suddenly cut off from the outside world. As "free refugees" we were naturally very upset by this, but thought that the measure had been taken because we were in a "protected area" and was not directed against us. In general, this could not possibly be a matter of internment because we enjoyed free postal contact. Furthermore, those comrades whose wives lived in the vicinity of the camp had almost daily visits on a free basis, i.e., their wives could stay in the camp for more than two hours. The situation changed on the 25th May; from that day on, our post was subject to censorship. Furthermore, we were no longer allowed to visit the cinema situated opposite the camp and, thirdly, we were allowed no more visits. With these new regulations, our status as "Internees" was sealed. And nevertheless, I could not believe that, as a "friendly alien", I was being interned, because, hitherto, we had only heard of the internment of Category A and Category B cases. Furthermore, in my registration booklet I had explicit confirmation of freedom from any internment. Nor, in the daily papers, was there any mention of a change to this confirmation.

The turning point came on the 26th May. We received the news that we would be leaving the camp that same evening. We were also told that everything was to be ready, and that we should take only minimum luggage with us. Everybody was to deposit all luggage remaining in the huts in a special room, and to arrange it according to huts. We were also advised that only suitcases were to be deposited, so that the subsequent forwarding of these luggage items would not be compromised by unreasonable enlargement of the total consignment. Because of these instructions, I handed in my two travelling cases separately, checked up in the Luggage Room that my two boxes were locked, and was ready for the journey with a small travelling case, a hatbox, an attaché case, and my portable typewriter. This was luggage that I could carry by myself and would see me through with clothing for about two weeks, assuming that delivery of the cases would take that long.

On the whole we were all gratified to be leaving this district for one less dangerous, and above all, that we would be enjoying our liberty as before. Having already gone through so much, we thought this was only right and proper. Thus, I confidently assumed that this would indeed happen in our new

place of accommodation. The belief that all this was a mere relocation of the camp was reinforced by more than 120 comrades coming with us, who had Polish or other non-German nationalities.

We had received instructions to appear for supper about an hour earlier. After the meal, everyone received a packet of food sufficient for about a day, and as an extra hand-out from the canteen's stock, 40 cigarettes per man. This was the first time in the camp that I was given anything extra besides the pocket money. Sir Robert Waley-Cohen, Chairman of the K.C. Committee, took the floor. As far as I remember, he talked about the idea and execution of the plan for the camp and praised the achievements of both sides (British Jewry and the camp residents) for the work done. But the climax came in the last sentences. He ended by saying that we were moving from the Committee's hands into those of the Government – namely, we were being interned. It seems that not everyone understood the discourse, held in English, for otherwise it is hard to understand that the speech was actually applauded. We were amazed that we had been given no information about our departure, and particularly, the exact time. But as we returned from the dining room to our huts, the solution to this riddle became apparent. There were armed guards in front of every hut, and, after entering them, we were forbidden to leave. Our luggage was now searched for weapons, after which we were taken, hut by hut, mostly in covered lorries, to the railway station. By the time I and my hut were loaded, it was midnight. Two special trains were waiting at the station. One train left about two hours before the other: one went eastwards and the other, west.

No one knew where we were going. Everyone waited impatiently for the next station in order to guess the direction and destination of our journey. When we passed Oxford and Birmingham we knew we were going to Liverpool and thence to the Isle of Man. On arrival in Liverpool we were accommodated in a large waiting-hall, where we also met our comrades from the first train. Of course, the hall was guarded and we had to wait there some four hours for the arrival of the steamer. It arrived, and during the boarding I discovered to my surprise that this was a Belgian ship plying the Ostend–Dover route. Even more surprising, this very steamer, nine months ago, had brought me over to Dover! But nine months ago I was a free man travelling to a free country, while now I was an internee leaving England again, for an island. The reason for the presence of this steamer is that many Belgian steamers fled to England when Hitler undertook his invasion of Holland and Belgium.

After a four-hour trip we arrived on the Isle of Man at Ramsey. I happened to be among the first to disembark and found myself facing a group of press-photographers, who took my picture for the next day's newspapers. I tried to get hold of that day's papers (28th May 1940), but I was unable to

do so from the camp. We had to give up our suitcases and marched in rows of four along the very long landing quay. As we crossed the bridge and entered Ramsey we met a well-prepared reception. Right in front, some ten trucks were lined up, ready to transport our luggage. Furthermore, the local police had set up barriers at which the whole population of Ramsey was forgathered. The grins on these people's faces showed that they did not know who we really were. We also heard a few shouted calls but could not make them out because we were too far from the barrier. For us, coming from the Kitchener Camp, where we had been welcomed and well received in all the district, this experience was the first disappointment. We marched for about twenty minutes to the camp. A British lieutenant marched ahead as leader of the column. On the way, he often turned round and called out to the men marching in front: "I am very glad to have brought you over!" or: "Don't worry, you have come to a wonderful place!" These shouts were well meant and for us they indicated at least good intentions. But they did not give us much joy, since we knew that we were heading for internment.

The camp came into view. At first glance we noticed the double barbed wire fences, with armed soldiers posted between them. We were received in German by an officer and immediately allocated to the houses. The first order to come through was that we were not to turn on any lights, nor to leave the houses any more that night. Hungry as I was, I quickly picked myself a room which had "1B" painted on the door, meaning 'one person'. The room presented a bed, a washstand, and a cupboard – nothing else. I threw myself on to the uncovered mattress with my things and, without undressing, slept like a log. Only next morning did I hear that, around midnight, some chaps had discovered food in the kitchen, situated in the cellar.

As the first thing next morning I collected my luggage together from the piles outside the houses. The billeting last night had proceeded in the order of our entry into the camp. In order to satisfy several wishes, it was now decided to allocate the houses according to the occupancy of the huts in the K.C. An exception was made for the group eating Kosher, who now occupied houses 3 and 4. So I took up residence in house 4. As older comrades were to live on the lower floors, I had to occupy a small room on the garret floor with my friend Dr. M. Glatt and a younger comrade, Max Naumburger, with whom I had been in the same hut in the K.C. The room was furnished with no more than a bed, a wash-stand, and one chair. Two had thus to sleep on the bed. I preferred to sleep on the floor, on a mattress that I had found in the cellar. Then we found another washstand, without drawers, and used it as a desk. The only good thing about this room was that we had the most marvellous view

imaginable. We could see all the beauty of the Isle of Man, with its hilly landscapes. Every time we looked out of the window we wished we could ramble in these hills and landscape.

The camp itself was situated in beautiful surroundings. One must remember that in normal times, Ramsey is a first class holiday resort with a long magnificent natural beach. Right alongside runs a raised promenade, with the finest hotels of Ramsey. These hotels, fourteen in number, and some small houses, had now been enclosed by a double barbed wire fence. The space available to us up to those small houses was not very large. If all our 819 men from the K.C. were to take a stroll there simultaneously, that would create a scene as from a major sea-side resort at the height of the season. But to ease this situation, a golf course situated next to our camp was fenced off, open daily from 2 to 7 pm. As a further gesture, we were allowed to bathe for twenty minutes a day in the Irish Sea. On the whole, one must acknowledge that the British authorities did do their best.

Unfortunately, the food was nothing special and was insufficient. After starving during the first days, we had to modify the cooking and cook a lot of soups. Moreover, even during the first week, a canteen was fixed up where I daily bought myself an additional half a loaf or so of bread, margarine, and also jam, in order to satisfy my needs. Rabbi Dr. Cohn of Berlin had come to Ramsey with a group of 400 kosher eaters from the Huyton Internment Camp. Thanks to his connections with Rabbi Dr. Unterman of Liverpool, we later obtained kosher meat and, occasionally, sausage.

I made use of my time in the internment camp, on the one hand, to acquire some cooking skills. On the other, I spent four to six hours each day writing a diary. I wrote these reminiscences with my typewriter on loose sheets of paper, because I got twice the amount done by typing. Sometimes I also went for a stroll. The air was wonderful and braced the appetite. The inhabitants of Ramsey would, particularly at the beginning, take walks around our camp to have a look at these "German parachutists". This is no joke, for that is what the population took us to be. Only that can explain the cat-calls that we once received from outside, such as: "Nazi swine", "murderers", and other such choice expressions. We naturally and immediately initiated a complaint to the "Officers", and indeed this led to a well-meant campaign of education. The former director of the K.C. (J. D. Layton), who was with us now in the uniform of a second lieutenant, called on the Committee in London for brochures about the K.C., and these were indeed distributed among the population. Furthermore, the vicar gave an instructive sermon in the church on Sunday, and with that, the matter was settled. Incidentally a third fence erected round the compound kept the onlookers at a distance and prevented the recurrence of such incidents.

Little by little, individual internment regulations came into force. Letters could be sent only twice a week, on prescribed paper. Of a very shiny finish, this paper was given out to us by the military authorities. Any money, razor blades, scissors, as well as tools, had to be handed in. Everybody could keep only 2 to 3 shillings, for purchases in the canteen.

The political situation was becoming increasingly acute. The newspapers, of which we received a few copies, were talking about the fear of Hitler's invading Ireland. As we were situated between Ireland and England we were getting a bit nervous.

We did not relax our efforts to have our luggage brought to Ramsey. We had been instructed to bring clothes and other items to last us for just a few days and thus could not possibly manage for weeks. We approached our former Camp Director daily to help us in this. We even went on to prepare a list to state clearly the number and nature of the luggage items each one had left behind in the Kitchener Camp, and the total value in Reichsmark. It turned out that 819 men had luggage to the value of nearly one million RM waiting in the K.C.; my own luggage I valued at 3,500 RM. The intention was, with this tabulation, to make Director Layton and the Bloomsbury House aware of the valuable property stored there and thus move them into taking action in the matter. Dr Layton assured us that he had passed our concerns on and would do everything in his power.

One afternoon about the end of June, we were suddenly summoned to a special assembly. Here, lists were drawn up of all singles between the ages of 16 and 40, in groups up to 20, 30, and 40 years of age. Then, every day, new lists were compiled, based on all sorts of data. We realized that something was afoot and voiced various conjectures. On the 2nd July, 130 unmarried men aged between 20 and 30, other than those living in the kosher houses, received instructions to pack and get ready for departure. Sacks were distributed all round, with the stipulation that no one was to take with him more than 40 lbs. A few men who did not want to travel were told that this was an order. And in the late afternoon of that very day, these 130 men departed.

Nobody knew whither – a different camp? – another country? – who even dared to believe that? Why were these refugees being taken to another country to safety when enough British children were living in endangered areas? One could read good intentions into this measure, if only because of the daily talk in the newspapers of a German invasion of Ireland. If this were to happen, we would be the first ones to be imperilled. But it was not yet clear that the destination was Canada, although there had been hints of this in the newspapers, so that we had no choice but to await further

developments. As only single men were taken in the first transport, it was even assumed that this camp was to be converted into one for marrieds.

However, on the 3rd July the order came through that all remaining unmarried men were to be ready for departure next morning. That same day everyone still possessing money had to give it in. At the same time, everybody was given his passport. Once we had our passports in hand it was obvious that Canada it was to be. My happiness at getting out of the danger zone is not to be described. Until 1:30 in the morning we were lined up at the office to get all the formalities done. Only then could I set about packing, and had to do this in the dark because of the black-out, when turning on lights was forbidden.

As I have mentioned, I was one of the kitchen staff, so at 3 o'clock I had to be in the kitchen to help make sandwiches for the boys who were travelling, and had to go without a night's sleep. At 5 o'clock we were all lined up in front of the house with our luggage, samples of which were subjected to a search. At 7 o'clock our column started moving and was conducted under guard to the railway station where a special train was waiting, which took us to Douglas. At least I still had the chance of an acquaintance with the beauty of the Isle of Man. At Douglas Central Station soldiers were waiting for us and some trucks for the luggage. We marched through the town to the harbour, where a troop transport steamer was ready for our transportation. On board the vessel we met people from the internment camps "Douglas" and "Onchan".

Where is this steamer taking us? – this was what I was asking myself and others. As we sailed outward, we turned north, so Liverpool was out of the question. Now we are moving along the eastern coast of the Isle of Man. We even pass Ramsey and can see the camp and the house where we spent six weeks. Why we had to go to Douglas, rather than the steamer coming to Ramsay, I fail to understand to this day. The boat was not so long that it could not pull alongside the quay at Ramsay.

Now we are watching out carefully for any definite deviation from the course. Later we turn further north-east, so we are going in the direction of Scotland. Our first assumption, that we were going to circle the Isle of Man and head for Belfast was now untenable. Now it could be Glasgow. After eight hours we arrived in Glasgow and remained stationary in the harbour for four hours without tying up. Only when it got dark did we pull close to a big trans-oceanic steamer with three funnels. The steamer had hoisted the Polish flag and was the former Polish passenger steamer "Pilsudski", which had, of course, acquired a layer of grey paint. The ships were tied to each other and a bridge slung

between our steamer and the other. The message now came through: whoever does not want travel further, i.e., wants to stay in England, is to report. Thereupon about eighty men reported out of the one thousand on board the smaller vessel. Meanwhile, the column of internees was already moving towards the other steamer. As I and a group of friends who wanted to stay together were now about to board the big steamer, we were ushered by an escort into a lounge. There we had to give our names, and were now informed that two hundred men too many had come along, and that the steamer could not take them all. Since eighty men had volunteered to stay behind, the other one hundred and twenty would necessarily have to be pulled out at random. "It's always better to be with the action", I thought to myself, and then "who knows what this is good for?" When the quota of two hundred (to stay behind, BS) had been filled, the others were allowed to board the big steamer. Meanwhile, a start was made with bringing over the luggage, despite the dark. Thus, it was unavoidable that luggage belonging to some of those perforce staying behind went on to Canada, while the luggage of people joining the ship was left behind on the small steamer: in other words: confusion reigned.

I was dog tired and cared about nothing else but to find the sleeping hall and reserve myself a bed. I was also rather angry, feeling as if beaten around the head and not knowing what all this was about. Next morning all this had passed. I said to myself: "Who knows what all this is good for?" and went confidently to get some fresh air.

But I had to discover, to my regret, that the big steamer had departed and we were still stationary in Glasgow Bay. I wished I were back in Ramsey and had forgotten everything. At about 9 o'clock a small boat tied up and foodstuffs were taken on board. Then it was said that we were going back to the Isle of Man.

And so we set out, travelling back for about eight hours. The ship's kitchen and the canteen had not been prepared for feeding an additional two hundred passengers for an extra day. As a result, we starved, particularly those who did not eat corned beef. We travelled back by the same route and again saw Ramsey gliding past us, just as on the journey out. We landed in Douglas and I was worried only that I would be brought back to Ramsey, which would have been close to the beginning of Shabbat. In fact, we were all conducted to the Central Promenade Camp, which was overcrowded. I was billeted to a house whose residents were kosher eaters. To my joy, I met there my relation Ringelheim from Berlin, among many acquaintances.

This camp had been constructed in the same style as Ramsey, but, with double the population, it had only half the street area. The picture was awful. On Saturdays and Sundays the people of Douglas would stroll to and fro along the outside of the barbed wire fence zone. The food, which we received in our house, was uneatable because it had been prepared so badly. We from Ramsey had eaten quite differently there from what they offered us here. No wonder that my comrades issued one protest after another and recommended me, who had worked as a kitchen-hand in Ramsey for only five weeks, as the perfect cook. They succeeded and I had no choice but to go the kitchen. I went to work with much courage and confidence and surprised myself that I could indeed cook. But this glory lasted only a day and a half. On the fourth day of our stay there, in the evening, the camp's speaker came to me and asked me to make a few carbon-copies of something for him on my typewriter. Typewriters were hard to come by in the camp, so it was little wonder that our house elder had recommended me. I was savvy enough to retain one copy, which I stuck into my wallet. For the sake of my later description of some contradictions, I reproduce below the contents of that carbon-copy:

All those who reported voluntarily for Canada, between the ages of 18 to 50 years, are to assemble tomorrow (Tuesday) morning at 9:30 at the gate with their luggage (up to 80 lbs.).

All unmarrieds between the ages of 18 to 50 years who did not voluntarily report for Canada, are to come tomorrow (Tuesday) morning at 9:30 to the lounge of House no. 7.

No married person, man or woman, will be deported against their will. Only those persons shall volunteer who have consulted their wives and are sure that they are coming. Anyone with doubts about the decision of his wife or children, should contact them by post and report for a later transport. About wives presently still at liberty there is no information to date. None of us is allowed to go to Port Erin (a women's internment camp, note by M.G.) without a permit from the War Office.

Nobody under 18 or over 50 years of age may go to Canada unless the War Office rescinds its orders.

All those who have already been to Glasgow are regarded as having already made their departure and must go, if they are aged 18 years or over.

Signed: Hildebrandt,

8th July 40, Camp Speaker

The Camp Speaker made this announcement on the basis of his discussions with the camp's command HQ. It implies that no married man is under duress. It was suggested to all the unmarrieds who assembled next day in the lounge of House no. 7, that they volunteer for this transport. The result was that all the unmarrieds who had hitherto not reported for the transport now joined it. Participation was now part voluntary, part compulsory, whereas in Ramsey the order had been that everybody must go. And here also, the end of the announcement declared that all those who had been in Glasgow had to go along. Anyone unwilling to travel had no choice.

On the morning of Tuesday, 9th July 1940, we were all assembled and standing at the exit gate. We were conducted from the camp to a nearby casino. There our luggage was subjected to a thorough examination after which, on orders, it had to be given up. Relieved of our luggage, we were allowed to return to the camp for our lunch, with orders to reassemble at the gate at 2 o'clock. We were informed there and then that we would not be returning to the camp so that people who had forgotten something should take it with them now. In the afternoon we were then subjected to a thorough body search, when I had to give up my cigarette lighter and 3s.10d. Then we were taken to an office, where our passports and registration books had to be handed in. Those of us who had come from Ramsey said that our passport formalities had been completed there and slipped through with passports in hand. Here, we clearly see another one of those typical cases of poor organisation. In Ramsey, where we had to give in our passports at the start of the internment, they were returned to us when we left the camp. Here in Douglas, the reverse was the case. The passports and registration books collected now from the old Douglas internees were put into small postbags bearing the address: WAR POST OFFICE, OPERATION BASE, CANADA. When I saw this I had no doubt whatsoever that the destination was Canada. We were now taken back to the casino hall, given two blankets and supper, and had to sleep that night on the floor.

Hay, 31.XII.40

The notes that I recorded in this notebook from the 10th December 1940 until today represent only about a quarter of what I had written down in Ramsey as a diary. The latter was pilfered from me on board the Dunera on the way here. The continuation ought now to be more exact, because throughout the journey I have been noting keywords on toilet paper. Naturally, I assumed that I would find my diary again and this would have been its continuation. I always had a third of a toilet

roll on me, unrolled it when I took notes, and then rolled it back to its former state so that none of the soldiers checking me could have any objection.

Hay, 1st January 1941

On the morning of July 10th 1940 we were roused early, or rather, while already awake in bed, nervous and excited about the journey. We were given breakfast and at 9 o'clock left the casino, heading for the landing pier. Our luggage, which we had given up earlier, was brought to the steamer by truck so that we could take nothing more out. However, at the pier there was no steamer to be seen. After we had waited for several hours, a small steamer approached the quay. First the luggage was loaded. Then a group of 330 men from the other camp at Douglas Heights, namely Onchan, went aboard, having arrived before us. When we then boarded the ship, we were given a great reception. The steamer had already called at Ramsey and had taken aboard 240 former Kitchener Camp men. On seeing us they naturally burst into howls, because they thought we had departed long ago. Then we were given a magnificent welcome. Of course we were immediately questioned about the destination: where are we headed? Do we know anything? "Of course to Canada", was my unequivocal reply, which I supported by telling them about the address – "Military Post Office, Operations Base, Canada" – and then showing everybody the carbon-copy of the announcement from Douglas, in which the destination was expressly given as Canada.

The steamer now left Douglas and turned in the direction of Liverpool. After eight hours, a slow run because this was a small vessel, we arrived in Liverpool, tying up at the same quay from which we had left to return to Ramsey six weeks ago. After a two-hour wait while we stood in pouring rain, the order came to disembark, every man taking along two pieces of luggage from the pile, irrespective of the owner. As it happened, I discovered my briefcase, which was tied to my typewriter, and of course took these two lighter items in one hand and somebody else's suitcase in the other. Things began to look a bit scary when I was witness to an escorting officer using his foot and his fist to strike some comrades who happened to be carrying heavy items and were thus not so quick in traversing the gangway.

As we disembarked from the smaller vessel, there loomed before us a large ocean steamer with the name "DUNERA – LONDON". What a pleasure to see this big ship, towards which we now proceeded.

Looking from below I could see how several comrades, already standing on the Dunera, were having their gas-masks torn from them. I thought nothing more of it and assumed that everyone leaving England had to hand in the gas-mask, given to him by the state. For lack of pockets, I had kept 100 cream sweets in my gas-mask holder, so of course I quickly took them out. Meanwhile, I had reached the Dunera. Suddenly, I found myself between two rows of soldiers with fixed bayonets, who were tearing off everyone's gas-masks, while hurriedly going into their pockets, taking a watch from one, cigarettes from another, wallets, fountain pens, propelling pencils, rings, and so on, all of which they let disappear into their own pockets. Anyone resisting this plunder was threatened with a rifle. In order to prevent us from realising what was happening, all this was done in great haste. Then, everybody was relieved of the suitcases they were carrying, which were thrown violently on to the pile of luggage, when any but the strongest items presumably suffered immediate damage. For fear of my typewriter being put out of action, I myself laid my luggage right at the base of the pile and my gas-mask next to it. Then, in order to avoid a search, I ran down the passageway marked out by the barriers and finally landed on one of the lower decks.

The scene I found here was more than depressing. An inordinate crowd of people had been herded into this space, with access to neither daylight nor fresh air, resulting in indescribable heat and a stifling atmosphere. Sitting at the tables were my comrades who had arrived here before me. They had laid out all their possessions on the tables in front of them, and soldiers were searching them individually for anything left in their pockets. Then they examined the piles lying on the tables and took everything they thought to be of value. Here and there some of them also tore up important documents, passports, and so on. It was all random. One took wallets, another left them; one took fountain pens, the other didn't, just as they fancied. All this aroused understandable disquiet among us internees and we demanded to speak to the officer in command in order to clarify our status with him. For the treatment we had endured until now drove us to the conclusion that we were being regarded as prisoners of war. After a while an officer showed up whose name later turned out to be O'Neil. We informed him about everything and even gave him the Kitchener Camp brochure to support our statements. This O'Neil merely listened briefly, pulled a face, said nothing, and disappeared – peculiar behaviour for an officer! A quarter of an hour later, that action was broken off. The soldiers doing the search were dismissed, taking their booty with them. An hour later, sacks with loose items came back. It became apparent as the restoration to their owners began, that only such items had been returned as the soldiers had not deemed valuable. Fountain pens, watches,

purses, etc., were missing from the returned items, and of course, cigarettes, of which the internees had, back in the camps, bought ample supplies for the journey.

Then we had our first supper. We were then informed that we would have to sleep that first night on the floor, as the hammocks could not be given out. The scene of that night had to be seen to be believed. We slept on the ground, on the benches and tables, on the steps of the stairs, and in the gangways, and even then there was not enough room for everybody to lie down. On top of that, we were overtired and simply had to get some sleep. And so the first night passed, in semi-sleep and dreams, with the sub-conscious working over the day's events. The heat was overwhelming. We had no fresh air, no daylight, and all on this overcrowded deck, with a resulting depression that people could hardly bear while staying there. On the way to the kitchen and to the toilets there were the stairs leading to the upper deck. This route, as well as all stairways, had been blocked with barbed wire, while armed guards stood day and night at the doors opening to the upper deck. People crowded near these fences to get a breath of fresh air and a glimpse of the sky. One usher, our man, regulated the traffic here, because the crowds of people leaving the decks for some fresh air were causing traffic jams.

Hammocks were distributed next morning. Everyone had to queue up and fetch their own. Several people had their watches and fountain pens taken from them by the soldiers standing nearby. This again aroused the men's ire; the decks now elected "deck leaders" who tried to get in touch with the officers in order to put a stop to this robbery. But all attempts by the deck leaders in this regard failed.

Via the open portholes in the toilets, one could both look out on to the sea, and, through a gap, on to the deck. Looking about seawards, we could see another steamer, berthed in Liverpool ahead of us. Also, a warship circling around was escorting us, which actually had a calming effect. Peeping through the gap on to the deck, we could see our luggage, soldiers opening our cases and rummaging through them, and several items disappearing into the kitbags they had brought along. This search for useful items was done not by repacking the unwanted items into the suitcases or briefcases, but rather by throwing them round about or into the sea. Only after we had spent three days in those decks (below) were we invited for a first walk up on deck. Half of us were brought on deck and had to walk on limited routes, marked out by armed guards. The whole walk lasted ten minutes and that apparently sufficed for our day's ration. This was a cruel joke that they were having themselves at our expense. We had to go past our luggage and see many suitcases that had been forced open.

Some had their locks torn away or ripped open, and others had simply been bayoneted open. Our things were lying on the boards – clothing, books, documents, foodstuffs, and so on. It was an awful sight, and it was no wonder that, from then on, some men forewent every “exercise”. After this walk, we re-christened the Dunera “Luggage Destroyer”.

From time to time, work details were assembled to perform various jobs on deck. Most men reported for them, if only for the chance to get out of this bedlam into the fresh air. The main task of these work groups was to bring all the luggage that was lying around on deck to one loading shaft, from which it was stored in the innards of the ship. At first we took this as a gesture towards us in preventing further looting of our luggage. But that proved to be a false assumption. Some of our men, who had been sent to the hospital because of sickness, reported later that soldiers made daily visits to the storeroom containing our luggage and emerged carrying bundles. Access to the luggage room led through the hospital, so it was unavoidable for these reports to reach us.

On about the fourth day, someone sought me out and handed me my “Tenach”, which he had found on deck during his exercise walk. First of all, this was proof that my briefcase had been broken open. From that day on I was very worried. The briefcase contained all my papers and documents, all of greatest importance for any future migration plans. In addition to these, I had purposely packed various valuable items in that briefcase in order to have them with me at all times. Moreover, I had tied the briefcase to my typewriter with a belt for carrying them together over my shoulder. So I said to myself: now that they have broken open my briefcase they are sure also to have made off with my typewriter.

The hunt for valuables did not abate. Anyone getting near a guard while still imprudently wearing his wristwatch was relieved of it. But the soldiers contrived ever new methods for gaining possession of literally everything valuable. When we returned from our exercise to the decks on the fourth day, we were subjected to a body search. In order to do justice to the Dunera, we assigned her to another class of warships, and called her a “Pick-pocket Battleship”, alluding to the German 10,000-ton battle-cruisers called “Pocket Battleships” (BS: by the British).

The efforts of the deck leaders to make contact with the military authorities or the ship’s Captain were still unsuccessful and were rejected. The reason given was that we were in a danger zone, so they could not receive us. Only on the fifth day of our journey were they received by an officer, who informed them that our destination was Australia. He also gave them some reports from the war theatre to pass on to us. His third message was that from now on there would be a daily ten-minute

exercise period. Just before the deck leaders had come with this news, I had bet with two comrades that we were going to Canada. I had good grounds for insisting on this and merely refer back to the document I have already quoted, which I was honoured to prepare in Douglas for the camp speaker, as well as to the fact that I myself had seen the postal sacks bearing the Canadian address.

The next days were by no means monotonous. The daily exercise included running on the deck, and we were spurred on mercilessly by the soldiers standing guard, some men even receiving blows with a rifle-butt when they did not run. As a result, the old and the sick were given a strip of red material by the doctor, to be attached to their jackets. These strips served as certification that the owners of this "Order of the Blood" were allowed to sit on deck during the exercise period. It was interesting that suddenly all the soldiers were fitted out with wrist watches and fountain pens.

Then one day, the deck leaders were summoned to the Liaison Officer, to be told that a spoon with an attached message had been found on deck, and was presumably intended as a bottle message. They were ordered to find out immediately who had written the message and throw it on the deck. Draconian measures were threatened at the same time, like curtailment of rations and an end to the exercise periods. When the deck leaders passed this message on, some fifty men admitted to the offence in order to protect the others from any punitive measures. All in all, the whole affair sounded like a pure invention. What sense was there in throwing such a message into the sea? The spoon and its message would obviously have sunk to the bottom without ever reaching land! For that reason alone, so many people "owned up". Finally, Rabbi Dr Ehrentreu and the Catholic clergyman Dr reported to the Liaison Officer in order to clear up the affair. The officer passed on to them a Declaration of Loyalty from the Commander, and with that the matter was closed.

Facilities for washing ourselves during the journey were extremely bad. As we were deprived of access to our cases for necessities such as soap, towel, comb, toothpaste, and so on, the business of having a wash can be imagined. I managed to obtain besides the dish towel a second one, so I was one of the happy few who had a towel. There was no hope for a comb, toothpaste, or soap. Our frequent demands for soap were met after one and a half weeks, and this too was largely the result of pressure on the part of the medical officer. We received one piece of soap for eighteen men. This soap definitely came from our luggage. But we also needed soap to be able to do our laundry. Here was I, for example, travelling from England to Australia with one shirt, one set of underwear, one handkerchief and one pair of socks. Add to this that I was more or less sleeping on the floor, so that my clothing was taking especially hard wear. Obviously, such clothing must be washed frequently –

but how, without soap? In the end I went over to laundering with the soft soap that we had been given for cleaning the mess table. All in all, the image we presented in the year 1940 could be described as that of a “20th century galley”.

As mentioned, the air in the decks was particularly foul. To improve it, “wind sacks” were introduced into the loading shafts shortly before we arrived at the equator. Indeed, the air did then improve a great deal, but two weeks had to go by before we were granted this relief.

The crew of this vessel was as curious a medley as ever conveyed a ship. The civilian crew consisted of men from the merchant marine, the navy and Lascars (Indian sailors), while the military were soldiers from the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, the Suffolk, and the Royal Norfolk Regiments. As to this military contingent, they were soldiers who had come back from France and were probably very depressed by the defeat they had suffered there. Now they may well be feeling the need to make a show of bravery in front of us refugees and at the same time to compensate themselves at our expense for all they had left behind there. Only thus can one explain their behaviour and thieving.

The mood among the various deportees took on very extreme forms when they confronted the fact that their destination was Australia and not Canada. Many had joined this transport on the grounds of the promise that its destination was Canada, in order to be closer to their ultimate emigration goal, the U.S.A. A few were in such despair that they would have taken their own lives by drowning if they had had the possibility to do so. The internees from the Lingfield Internment Camp were particularly affected (??) by this. They had received notification that they were going to another camp. And now this other camp turned out to be Australia.

During the whole voyage I lived and slept on the “Sergeant Deck”, which was meant for ninety-seven men, but was utterly crowded with a hundred and forty-eight. Not only did we have to sleep and eat here – we were forced to spend the whole day every day in this room. On top of all this, here we had to hang out our laundry to dry, so that the inflow of air was artificial and inadequate. As this deck was designed for ninety-seven men, only ninety-seven hammocks were hung up. The other fifty-one slept on the floor under the hammocks. They could each only go to bed when the man above was asleep, so as not to be trodden on. Each man had an air volume of only two and a quarter cubic meters.

After travelling now east, now west during the first days of the journey, we were heading south and approaching the equator. The sky is particularly beautiful here at sunrise and sunset and the latter

especially remarkable for an incomparable display of colours. Within ten minutes the day turns into night and here we have no dusk.

22.7.40

Tonight we will have been at sea for twelve whole days. We have become accustomed to the swaying of the ship and are not bothered by lying on the floor, although at night we sometimes find ourselves on top of our neighbour to the right or left or some object slips off the table and lands on us. Yesterday, the vicar had a conversation with the Captain, who explained that he recognised the error of bringing us on board the ship. However, when all the documents had been thoroughly checked, twenty very suspicious people might be on board, and therefore the measures taken had to be maintained. Twenty out of 2,300! And for that, to keep us under daylight* and behind barbed wire! (* BS: "under daylight" may refer to continuous illumination even at night – see below.)

24.7.40

The fourteenth day of our journey; we are docking in Freetown. Africa! In order just to get a glimpse of Freetown (and Africa) we line up and get to the toilets after an hour's wait, where we are allowed to spy through the gaps for just one minute. We had had no drinking water for five days and now the water for washing had also been turned off, because, for reasons beyond our understanding, here no water was to be had. The ship took in oil from a tanker that was riding on my side (of our ship) from where I could watch, with my head pushed through the bull's eye. Now we could see negroes approaching our ship in boats. Some people threw them old coins, for which they dived with great skill. There were hundreds of ships in the harbour itself, including warships. We left Freetown that same day.

25.7.40

Today, searches were carried out again, directed mainly against watches and wedding rings. Apparently, it was only such items that the soldiers were able to flog in Freetown. For this purpose, they thought up the following. The order came that everyone had to appear barefoot on deck for the

daily exercise. Then searches were made in our absence, extending to the inside of our shoes. Today, when we had to be on deck for the exercise for more than half an hour rather than the usual ten minutes, we knew what was going on down there. One internee, who had his wedding ring on his finger and did not hand it over at the demand of the soldier, got a stab from a bayonet. This soldier, a sergeant, was now dubbed "Public Enemy No. 1" and (we) kept out of his way as far as possible. To all the actions that had earned him this title, I must add the following brilliant deed: during today's walk, barefoot as we noted, he tossed an empty bottle between our ranks and then goaded us to run faster, with threats from his bayonet. As an obvious result, several internees sustained injuries. The deck leaders lodged a complaint with the Liaison Officer, who made this "Public Enemy No. 1" apologise to the deck leaders. His "Sorry" sufficed for the officers to regard the matter as closed.

The following story has come through today from the (ship's) hospital: during the stop in Freetown, a negro physician came aboard at the request of the Medical Officer, to examine a suspected case of typhus. After the examination, which was negative, the negro physician asked the MO: "Well, doctor, and now show me your hospital". This Negro physician was standing in the ship's hospital and was asking where was the hospital! How the British must have been embarrassed by that question! The hospital deserves a chapter on its own. I had a boil on my hand and had to see the doctor. To this end, I had to stand for one and a half hours at the barbed wire till a sentry came and collected us. In the hospital I was treated by one of our doctors. They did not even have enough plasters or bandages to protect the open sores from dirt. Of course, the hospital was overcrowded, with some 50 per cent of the patients lying on mattresses on the floor.

27 July 40

Today we docked at TAKURADI to take on fresh water at long last. On the days we rode in the harbour the exercise period on deck was cancelled. So we wanted to resume our voyage as soon as possible, in order all the sooner to be able to leave this boat. Now came a new development – from today on, we received butter to spread on our bread and no more margarine. It has been a long time since I last ate butter – which was thus particularly tasty. After a stay of two days in Takuradi we moved on. The only thing worth special mention is that this morning only five sinks were available in the forward section of the ship for 1,500 men to wash.

Today's exercise on deck was special again, in that a few of us were kicked for not running fast enough. The reply to our complaint to the Liaison Officer was that this had been done with his agreement. Further, the following incident occurred that night: the electric lamps were on day and night on the (lower) decks, which were also our sleeping quarters. But at night particularly, they prevented us falling asleep. So we hung towels or bowls round these lamps to dim the light. One of the towels caught fire but, luckily, was extinguished immediately. Alerted by the smell of the burning towel, the sentry came to see what was the matter. He dutifully reported this to his sergeant, who also came along. Though apprised of the exact circumstances, the latter still found it necessary to send the internee nearest to that lamp to the ship's prison, although he had had no part in the incident. Today also, a new Liaison Officer was appointed. His first action was the following: the deck leaders had sat down with some lawyers and discussed the matter of compensation. In order to conform with the law, they decided to hand a letter to the Commander at this stage with our demands. The new Liaison Officer threatened the deck leaders with punishment if they present such letters to the Commander in the future.

4.8.40

Today the response came through to our frequent demands to be allowed to write to our relatives: we were permitted to draw up a combined list, which is to be sent to Bloomsbury House in London or respectively, to the other committees. The list contained only the given and family name of each internee and the address of the person whom he wished to contact. This list is then to be sent off from Cape Town.

In general, every effort was made from within our ranks to make our voyage as pleasant as possible despite all the incidents. A theatre group was started, which performed something almost every evening on a different deck. This group included, among others, Josef Almas and E. Lohde of the Volksbühne (BS: the People's Stage) in Berlin, and the former chief of advertising for the Sarasani Circus, Dr Russek. There were lectures about cinema, theatre, and the press; about oriental countries and the Balkans, as well as talks on specialised subjects. There was daily instruction in English. This in particular helped us to overcome much boredom.

Today we berthed in Cape Town. Just before entering the harbour we managed to have our daily exercise. Unfortunately, the port and city were so shrouded in fog that we saw hardly anything during the exercise period. At midday I myself went to the kitchen to fetch the food for my table, of which I was the table leader, so that I could get a view from the kitchen. First, the famous Table Mountain caught my eye. At its foot lay Cape Town, beautifully situated by the sea. It was a magnificent view, especially after we had seen nothing for four weeks. The view was even more beautiful when I fetched the food in the evening – for the first time since the outbreak of war I was seeing a city fully lit up, the image enhanced by the colourful neon signs.

New foodstuffs were quickly taken on board – water, oil, and other consumer items. Two newspapers got through to us, so that we obtained an impression of the war fronts. In one paper we saw an announcement from which we learned that the Revisionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky had died. The wording of the announcement was:

ה ז כ ר ה

NEW ZIONIST ORGANISATION in conjunction with the

COMBINED Zionist Societies

and

CAPE PENINSULA HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

A Memorial Meeting

to the memory of the late

Mr VLADIMIR JABOTINSKY

will be held in the

CITY HALL, CAPE TOWN

on

Saturday morning

~~~~~



We left Cape Town on 9.8.40 after a stay of one day.

12.8.40

Today, the first census was taken, with the result that we were two men in excess. Meanwhile, the officers were sending bundles daily, with underwear, suits, shoes, books, etc., which the deck leaders were to distribute to all who needed them urgently. However, in general we refused to accept things that did not belong to us. We organised exhibitions on all the decks in order to locate the true owners. These exhibitions dragged on until we landed. Any man who found something was disappointed – because he thus had evidence that his suitcase had been broken in to. Anyone finding nothing could still hope that his cases had remained intact. On the 14.8 the deck leaders were handed electric shavers – eight in all. Until that day there had been no possibility for shaving and we were all sporting beards. Now, with delivery of these eight shavers, we were all required to shave. Presumably they did not want our appearance when we arrived in Australia to betray at first sight the treatment we had received. But to give out only eight shavers for about 1,500 men on the forward section of the ship was more than scandalous. For nothing can spread diseases more easily than just these shavers and their razor-blades, especially when most of the men, with their thick beards, were suffering injury from cuts.

21.8.40

Today brought the suicide of our comrade Weiss of lower Austria. During the exercise on deck he had suddenly jumped out of the line and thrown himself overboard. All the participants in the exercise were immediately led to their decks. The ship stopped and circled round that site. Life-belts were thrown overboard and a lifeboat lowered. All search was fruitless. Then the ship continued on its course. About Weiss's motives I would like to add the following: Weiss had been with me in the Kitchener Camp. He was in possession of an emigration permit to Brazil, where he was going to live with his mother and brother. At the very time when internment was decreed for the Kitchener Camp, he had received the document required from his brother, and was to appear with it before the Consul in London. All his attempts to get to London failed. Then came the transfer to Ramsay, where he lived in the same house as I and also worked in the kitchen. There followed the trip to Glasgow – Douglas, and finally the Dunera. Because he was so close to reaching his planned destination, the

internment and the frustration of his plans to reach it must have gone to his mind. We were not together on the Dunera, where he was placed in the rear, and I in the forward section of the vessel. It may well also be that the treatment he experienced on the Dunera gave him the final push. The deck leaders were summoned to the Liaison Officer to receive the news of Weiss's death. At the end he added that most of us would be released in Australia. I took this statement, given its context, as a mere dose of tranquiliser.

The attempt by Rabbi Dr Ehrentreu to organise a joint mourning service on deck, with participation of both halves of the ship, was not permitted. In protest, a major service was held on the following Saturday on one of the decks.

Sunday, 25.8.40

Today, one of the older internees succumbed to his sickness. The funeral was conducted with all honours according to Jewish law, although only a limited number of comrades was allowed to attend. The deceased was then lowered into the sea.

Tuesday, 27.8.40

Today we are finally docking – in Australia! What joy! This was Freemantle, the port city of Perth, Western Australia. Our joy increased as we were all called on deck and examined by two doctors – only our eyes and arms. We were then counted. All this was taking place while we were still at anchor in the bay prior to entering the harbour. The anchor was raised and we sailed in. Provisions and water were now taken on. Australian officers then came aboard, to have a look at our living quarters. Here, one of our deck leaders, Dr Wiener, took the initiative and told these officers that we had been wronged and had suffered gross injustice. As these military men were leaving the deck, one of them came back and asked Dr Wiener about this and that, and was given the appropriate replies. We felt satisfaction that our plight had taken its first steps into public knowledge. One day later,

the 28.8.40

we moved on. The departure from Freemantle was one of the most wonderful experiences of this journey. (I had the opportunity just then to look out via the kitchen.) The city and its port were gliding past my view like in a film, until, once again, there was only water and sky.

29.8.40

The fiftieth day of our voyage – fifty days below deck without daylight; everyone pale, half sick. I must say that during this voyage I had to overcome many pains and tribulations. I have been living ‘kosher’ and have had very little to eat, so it was no wonder that I was hardly able to stand on my feet for more than hour, as I had to discover in Freemantle.

Some particulars about our destination are circulating today: one-third – Melbourne, two-thirds – Sydney. When having the difference between ‘vegetarian’ and ‘Kosher’ explained to him by our deck leader, one officer expressed himself favourably about the camp at our destination and said that worst was behind us.

3.9.40, 10 hrs

We land in Melbourne, and a newspaper coming our way reported that this morning is the coldest in eighty-five years. It’s people bringing weather with them!

All German and Italian prisoners as well as A-cases (Tribunal – England), some 600, are being taken off here. Of Melbourne itself we could not see much. The same day we resume our voyage, with only one more port of call.

On this last leg of the voyage an accident still occurred! Two comrades from the stern section, both amateur boxers, were engaged in a boxing match in which the one, called Friedmann, took an unfortunate blow and died of a heart attack. I was still called to the hospital, where a doctor handed me my briefcase, which had been ransacked. The soldiers were apparently unable to force open the particularly strong locks I had on it, so they had simply slashed it open with a bayonet. This ruptured state of my briefcase was the perfect evidence for the mayhem wrought by that gang. There followed a complete registration of every man, including fingerprinting. On Friday

6 Sept. 40, 11:30

we docked at Sydney after a voyage of fifty-eight days with no land underfoot. Oh, how thankful we are to G-d that we have managed these strains and stresses.

Trains were waiting right at the quayside to take us inland. I stayed with the Kitchener Camp group and travelled on the fourth and last train. Just one more look through the compartment window at the ship gave us a view of her which we had not had since Liverpool, and then we were glad to be aboard her no longer.

Well, we were loaded on to an unscheduled train, guarded by four soldiers to a carriage. First, it was palm trees that came into view as we were leaving the port. Then we could see Sydney from the train – a rather large city. The journey then continued into the interior of Australia, a train ride of eighteen hours, for which we had been provided with a packed breakfast. We saw steppes and more steppes, and in between, a few small townships. On

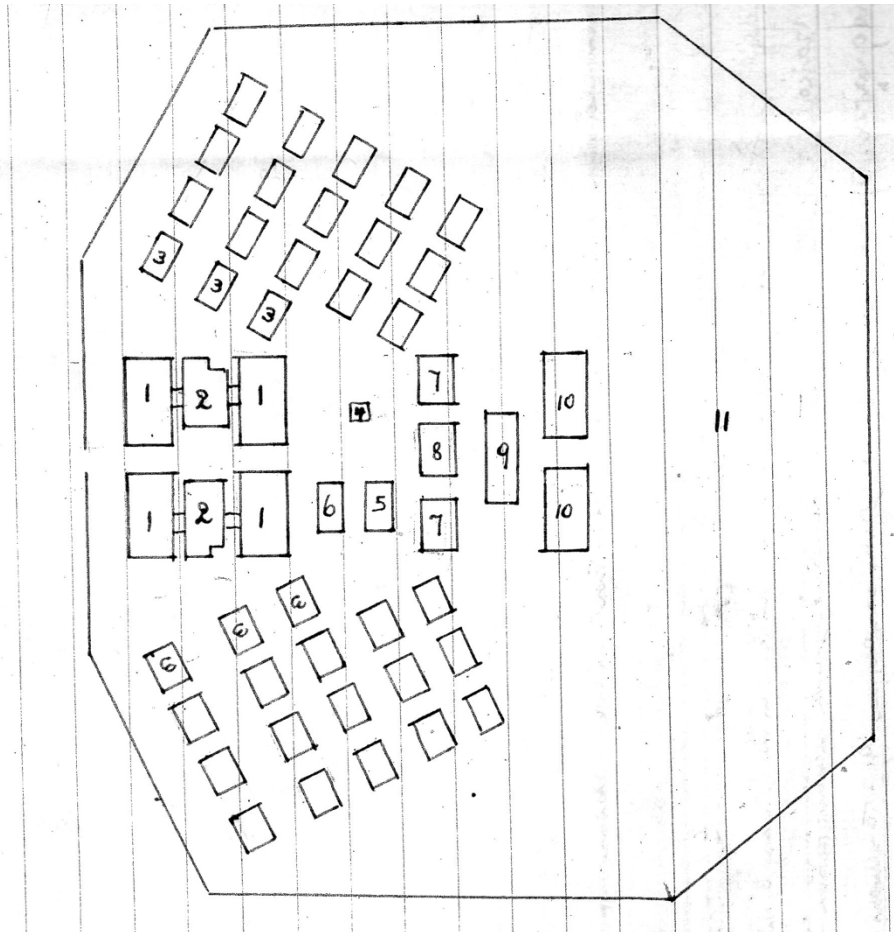
7.9.40, 12 hrs

we arrived at HAY. This was the terminus of the railway line – and of civilization, and indeed the beginning of the desert. Right in the very station we were confronted by placards with instructions for action in case of bee stings or mosquito bites, etc. We were truly received as prisoners of war. A large contingent of military stood at the ready. The population of Hay was already at the barriers waiting for us. We could see our camp right from the railway station.

On arrival in the camp we were greeted with much excitement. The previous arrivals had prepared everything as far as possible. So we could have our first meal straight away. The camp had been constructed for only 1,000 persons. To explain several features more easily, I'll try to provide a sketch.

The numbers in the sketch (below) denote the following:

- 1) Dining rooms; 2) Kitchen and stores; 3) Huts; 4) Medical hut; 5) Hospital;
- 6) Canteen, Bank, Dental Centre and Headquarters; 7) Washrooms; 8) Shower room; 9) Laundry room and hot & cold shower room; 10) Toilets; 11) Parade ground (later, sports ground).



The camp itself was thus quite nicely constructed and satisfied the most primitive needs. The hut serving as hospital had originally been intended as a reading room. Apparently, they expected only healthy internees, with no need for a hospital.

Well, on the first day, all of us (ca. 2,000) were brought to one camp because the second camp was not ready yet. Some 400 men were taken daily to the other camp to sleep the night and brought back to the completed camp to spend the whole day there, while the Australian labourers continued their work. I was included in that group because all those wishing to eat kosher had

formed a group together. This went on for about three weeks and was the worst time that we had to endure here during the internment. During the day we had to be present in the camp, but simply could not be accommodated in any of the huts. These were overcrowded anyway and a third of the people were sleeping on the ground. We could not stay in the dining room either, because there were two shifts eating there. So, for better or for worse, we had to spend the whole day out of doors. In addition, the weather here at this time was wintery. The mornings were so cold that you had to wear an overcoat. Yet by 10 o'clock, it had become so warm that we dispensed with our shirts. But where were we to leave our things? So we just had to wear our coats also during the hot period.

For the first two weeks we were not allowed to write any mail at all and instead, after that period, were given pre-printed cards, which we were allowed to send. I received a telegram with a reply form from my sister, but was allowed to answer it only three days later. That shows how ill-defined was the whole matter of postal communication.

Our luggage arrived only after two weeks. The fact was that the military authorities had to examine every item of luggage before admitting it into the camp. So all the luggage was stacked outside the camp. Every day a luggage detail went out of the camp to help the examining officials. At the same time lists were compiled, naming the owner of the luggage and the condition it was in. During this examination, the Australian authorities received an impression of the vandalism rampant on the Dunera. Nothing could support our testimony more convincingly than the state of our luggage. No more than twenty to twenty-five per cent of the people retrieved their baggage whole. A similar proportion recovered no luggage at all. The others received their cases broken or slashed open.

Only after most of the luggage had been distributed did I get my two cases. Unfortunately, I was not born under a lucky star in this regard (nor in others). Thus, on opening my cases, I had to realise that half their contents were missing and the rest consisted of other people's things. Now all I still had to receive was my typewriter – but that did not turn up. Presumably, one of the higher class bandits had taken a fancy to it.

Everyone had to report all missing items and these were officially recorded, in order to provide exact documentary proof in the event of claims to be filed for compensation. Later on, exhibitions were held of unidentified belongings. I thus recovered a dozen socks and my seventeen ties because, luckily, they were all marked with my full name. Just at that time of the luggage being

given out, the exhibitions, and the conditions in the overcrowded camp, the notorious Liaison Officer "O'Neil" put in an appearance. It seems he had wanted to see how we were and how we were being accommodated. He was walking in the company of another officer from the Dunera Registration Department. When the news of his presence got round, we all gathered at a run to see him. Then the crowd started whistling him down, and there were shouts like "Mr O'Neil is responsible for our luggage". The situation looked like degenerating into physical action if Mr O'Neil had not preferred to leave the camp in all haste. From that day, a few internees hung their cases up, empty as they had been returned, right outside the headquarters, with the inscription: "Luggage from H.M.T. Dunera". The Australian officers were fully in the know and showed understanding for us. Then tempers calmed down.

At long last, after three weeks, we settled in the camp that had been assigned to us, located opposite the first camp. We had been making arrangements to elect a joint representation vis-à-vis the authorities, which, in future, was to intervene in all matters arising. But it was based on false premises. On the day we left the camp in order to move into our new one situated right opposite, all communications ceased. If someone in our camp wished to locate a friend from the camp opposite, or had arranged to catch a glimpse of him and wave, he would have to write him a letter via the District Censor in Sydney, which would have arrived to the addressee some three weeks later.

We now set about electing our own representation in order to do some constructive work. I myself was sent as delegate of the kosher section in the storage camp. At the beginning, I worked solidly for days in order to get to know the management and, generally, the whole set-up. It was not very easy to gain acceptance, but that came with time. Later on, I had it easier.

As time went on a routine camp life developed. A camp school was instituted, as were also a theatre group, sports groups and, as the main project, a bank. The latter was linked to a canteen, which operated along the following principles: the payment for any purchase made in the canteen included a certain surcharge. Once a certain reserve fund had been established in this way, all those doing important camp work were credited with one shilling a week as pay. Later this approach broadened and every person, with no account with the bank, could take fourteen cigarettes (8 d.) a week on credit. He was obliged to refund this when he received a sum of over 10 sh. from somewhere. In our camp we had many people with a lot of money – mainly business people from London – who were also very good customers of the canteen. Furthermore, almost

every second man was getting money from somewhere and was thus in a position to buy himself various items in the canteen. The latter's turn-over grew from week to week. Thus, later on, some of the salaries could be raised. I too was one of those getting a top salary – 2 sh. a week.

Our remoteness from civilisation is something we can only sense when we are expecting mail. Until the 23rd November, for almost five months, I had been without news from my relations. And even then it arrives very rarely. Many letters have gone astray and will probably never reach me. On the other hand, I am receiving letters today which had been sent to me six months ago to the Kitchener Camp. These letters then went to Ramsey, to Canada, back to Ramsay, on to Douglas, and only then to here – in fact, half-way round the world! Fortunately, most of my documents have been returned to me after another internee suddenly found them in his case. That enabled me to write first of all to my oldest brother, in New York, and then to take up other contacts. Those documents were returned and handed over to me by the military authorities, because that internee was residing in the other camp. They included also my expired Polish passport, which was then indeed confiscated by the military.

With the establishment of a "Transmigration Bureau", and as the first thing, all possible lines of communications were set up, viz. with Bloomsbury House, the American Consulate and the local authorities. The documentation needed for everybody's further migration was assembled.

In the newspapers and letters arriving here we read about the release of the various internees in England. Many of those who had been interned with us were now free men. The fact is that we too, if we had stayed in England, would now have been free men. Fate decided otherwise.

According to one of the "White Papers" issued by the government, we were now able to apply for release. But we the faced the danger that, if our applications were approved, we would be brought back to England, and the release would actually be effected only there. The applicant for "Release" was thus faced with the following questions before handing in his application:

- 1) to apply and be brought back to England?
- 2) to make no application and await further developments?

I decided on the latter course.